



Sewell's



Tales

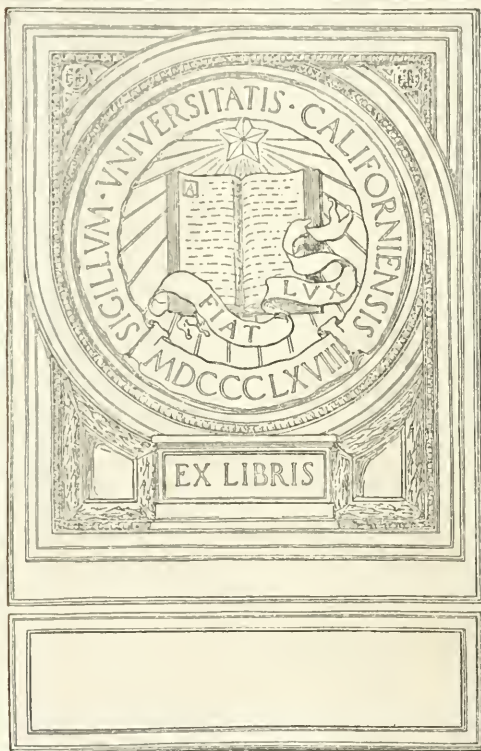
and Stories



A

my Herbert.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES





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AMY HERBERT

Ballantyne Press
BALLANTYNE, HANSON AND CO.
EDINBURGH AND LONDON

AMY HERBERT

BY

ELIZABETH M. SEWELL

Why should we fear Youth's draught of joy,

If pure, would sparkle less?

Why should the cup the sooner cloy

Which God hath design'd to bless?

CHRISTIAN YEAR

NEW EDITION

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1886

АВТОРИТЕТНО-ПРАВОВОЕ
ОБЩЕСТВО ИЛИ
ОБЩЕСТВО ЗАКОНА
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AMY HERBERT.

CHAPTER I.

IN a remote picturesque village, on the borders of one of the few remaining forests in England, was situated the home of Amy Herbert. It was a lovely cottage, with a thatched roof and latticed windows, covered with creepers and roses, and standing upon a smooth velvet lawn, which gently sloped to the edge of a clear stream, that flowed sparkling along at the bottom of the garden. A small but very beautiful pleasure-ground divided it from the forest, which stretched far away behind for many miles; whilst in the front it commanded a view over the village of Emmerton, with its scattered dwellings and its gray church-tower, and the distant country beyond. The interior of the cottage consisted of a drawing-room, with windows opening upon the lawn, a small study, a dining-room which looked out on the most retired part of the garden, and several bedrooms; and it was here that Amy Herbert passed the earliest and the happiest portion of her life: and though to some it might have seemed that her pleasures could have been but few, as she had no companions of her own age, not many servants to wait upon her, and no money to expend on whatever might be the fancy of the moment, yet it may be doubted whether any of those who have been brought up in the midst of luxury, have ever spent so happy a childhood as hers. For Amy lived in her quiet home, with the mother who to her was all in all; and when she sat by her side at work, or read to her aloud, or walked with her, or listened to her sweet voice as she sang her favourite songs, she had not a wish for anything else that the world could give. In the summer, Amy's mornings were employed in learning from her mother all

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that was considered necessary for the education of a lady ; for Mrs Herbert, besides possessing a well-cultivated mind, understood both music and drawing, and spared neither time nor trouble in endeavouring to give her child a taste for the same pursuits. The afternoons were often spent in an arbour, shut out from the view of every passer-by, where Amy read to her mother the books which most interested her ; and in the evening she generally walked with her into the village, either to inquire after some of their poor neighbours, or to pay a visit to the rectory, where the affection with which she was received was always a source of enjoyment, though there were no children to be her play-fellows. Occasionally, also, Amy would persuade her mother to wander with her into the forest, and there, leaving her seated on the trunk of some old tree, with her book or her work, she would search amongst the thick underwood for wild flowers or wood strawberries, and return to her, triumphantly laden, as she said, with spoils : and when the falling dews and the gathering twilight told that it was the hour of rest, Amy, kneeling in her chamber, repeated her evening prayers, and, after receiving her mother's last fond kiss and her fervent blessing, laid her head upon her pillow, to dream of the joys of the past day, and the interests of the coming morrow.

The winter also brought its delights : the warm fireside in the morning, and the quick walk in the middle of the day, when the sun was shining and the earth glittering with the frost, and the tales of days and people long gone by, with which Mrs Herbert would amuse her little girl in the dusky twilight ; whilst in the evening came the bright lamp and the hissing urn, to make them forget that there was anything like cold or discomfort to be endured without. And so Amy's childhood passed tranquilly on ; not that it was entirely free from interruptions and disappointments, or that she was always able to follow her own inclinations ; for there were gloomy days and causes of vexation, and she had faults which, at times, interfered with her happiness ; but her annoyances were soon over, and whenever she gave way to any evil feelings, either of ill temper, indolence, or carelessness, the sorrowful expression of her mother's countenance, and the grave tone of her voice, never failed to recall her quickly to a better mind.

There were, besides, other pleasures to vary the regularity of Amy's life ; a drive in the rector's carriage to the neighbouring town, or an invitation to drink tea at the parsonage, or, what she

most delighted in, a long walk with her mother, to wander over a large old house, which was about two miles distant from the cottage, and situated on the same side of the forest, though in a different direction from the village. Emmerton Hall was indeed a most interesting place; the house—the work of ages passed away—was of gray stone, deeply stained by exposure to the severity of many a wintry storm. It was a large, irregular building, with high gable ends, deep oriel windows, turrets with pointed pinnacles, and heavy, clustering chimneys nearly hidden by masses of the rich, dark ivy which covered a great proportion of the walls. The principal front consisted of the original three-gabled house and two projecting wings which had been added at a later period, and along its whole length extended a broad gravel terrace, divided from the other part of the grounds by a stone balustrade, and ornamented at regular intervals with large Italian vases. From this terrace a flight of steps at each end descended to the pleasure-garden, which was laid out in green lawns, and shrubberies, and winding walks, and bounded by a clear sheet of water flowing through the whole of the demesne. On the other side of the water stretched a richly-wooded park that had once formed a portion of the forest, whilst from the terrace might be seen beyond this a wide expanse of lovely country,—corn-fields, meadows, villages, and churches, blended together in the soft mists of the distance, and terminated by the faint shadow which marked the outline of one of the highest ranges of hills in all England.

To the right of the house the ground rose abruptly in a hill of considerable height, the sides of which had been partly formed into smooth grassy terraces, and partly planted with beech, ash, elm, and oak trees, and amongst these many walks were cut, ascending gradually to the top, and opening at length upon a line of down, from whence might be discovered a view so extensive as to reach even to the glittering waves of the ocean.

At the back and to the left of the mansion, the grounds were of great extent, and still beyond them lay the park, carrying the eye into deep hollows and sunny glades, till its furthest trees were lost amongst the rich foliage of the adjacent forest.

Such was the exterior of Emmerton Hall, and the interior suited well with it in beauty. The oldest part of the building consisted, indeed, of long, low chambers, wainscoted with dark oak, and giving an idea of solemnity, if not of gloom; but the wings, which were of a later date, contained spacious saloons, and large lofty drawing-rooms hung with paintings, and rich in

splendid though old-fashioned, furniture, that would have done honour to the palace of the proudest noble in the land. It was not amongst these, however, that Amy Herbert found her chief enjoyment,—she cared little for the more modern additions ; but her great pleasure was to wander through the long passages, and explore the dark rooms which had for years been disused, while the silent mansion echoed with the gay sounds of her young voice, as she discovered some hitherto unknown closet, or started back half amused, and half frightened, at the grim visage of some valiant knight or ancient lady which stared at her from the walls.

There was a chapel, too, attached to the house ; and great was Amy's delight to look down from the private gallery that had been specially reserved for the ladies of the family, upon the massive oaken seats ranged on each side of the narrow aisle, and while the rays of the sun, streaming through the painted glass of the east window, lighted up every corner of the building with a rich, unearthly hue, to people them in her own imagination with the servants and retainers, who, she had been told, once occupied them daily.

For the first few years of her life, Amy's visits to Emmerton Hall had been those of unmixed happiness ; but as she grew older, and learned to feel more and more that no joy was complete unless her mother could share it with her, she began to perceive that, however willingly Mrs Herbert might grant her petition to visit the old house, and however patiently she might wait whilst she satisfied all her childish curiosity, yet, at their return home, there was always a look of sorrow on her countenance, and sometimes even a tear glistening in her eye ; and the cause of this she was soon able to understand, for Emmerton had been to Mrs Herbert all that the little cottage was to Amy. It had been the scene of her earliest pleasures—the home of her childhood—the spot where she had dwelt with parents, brothers, sisters, and friends, who were now, some dead, some scattered in distant countries, and all so far from her as to make her feel lonely and sad in the halls where once she had known little but enjoyment. But it was not till Amy had nearly reached her twelfth year that she became aware of the increasing extent of the painful feelings excited in her mother's mind by these visits to the Hall. During the first year of her marriage, Mrs Herbert had lived at the cottage, but her family were still settled at Emmerton, and the separation was merely nominal. After that time, the death of her father and mother broke, in a great degree, the ties which

had bound her to her early home ; for her brother, on whom the property devolved, had married a lady, whose proud disposition suited but ill with Mrs Herbert's meek spirit ; and when, on the death of a relation, Mr Harrington became the owner of a still finer estate in another county, Emmerton was almost deserted. It was true he returned to it occasionally, but his visits were less and less frequent ; and, although the steward and housekeeper were ordered to keep it in complete repair, it was only as a place for show, and because his pride would not permit him to sell or let an old family residence.

All this was a great trial for Mrs Herbert, though, whilst Colonel Herbert was with her, it was comparatively but little felt ; but the duties of his profession at last called him to a foreign land, and it was then that she first knew the real loneliness of her situation, the only alleviation being the society of her friends at the parsonage, and the delight of receiving constant and cheerful letters from abroad. At the period, however, just mentioned, when Amy was about twelve years of age, the time appointed for Colonel Herbert's absence had expired ; but no news had been received from him for a considerable time. Post after post arrived without letters from him. Friends came back from the country to which he had been sent, but none brought intelligence of him. Mrs Herbert's heart sank within her, the most sad forebodings took possession of her mind, and even the company of Amy often served only to increase her melancholy, as it reminded her more forcibly of the probable failure of those visions of future happiness, in which she had indulged when dwelling upon the prospect of her husband's return to his native land, to spend the remainder of his days with her and with his child.

Continued anxiety at length seriously affected Mrs Herbert's health ; and even Amy, young as she was, became sensible of it, and learned to look eagerly for the daily post, in hopes that it might bring some letter which would make her mother smile again as she had been used to do, while she seldom expressed a wish to go to Emmerton, since it only added to Mrs Herbert's depression, by reminding her of the absence of her relations as well as of that of her husband. Still Amy did not fully enter into the causes of her mother's uneasiness ; and when she stationed herself at the white garden-gate every morning to watch for the old postman, it was with a feeling of expectation very different from the nervous eagerness with which Mrs Herbert longed for his arrival.

‘Here he is, mamma!’ she exclaimed, joyously, as she ran to the drawing-room window one lovely summer morning, after having waited unusually long at the gate. ‘Here he is! just turning the corner of the lane. Do let me go and meet him; I shall bring the letters much quicker than he will, and there must be one from papa to-day.’

Mrs Herbert half smiled as she kissed her child’s forehead, and parted her dark ringlets. ‘You may go, love,’ she said; and Amy waited to hear no more. In a minute she was at the end of the lane, entreating the old postman to give her the letters; but he was both deaf and obstinate, and resolved that no one should have the honour of delivering them but himself; and Amy, after repeatedly urging her request in vain, returned disappointed to her mother. The delay had but increased Mrs Herbert’s painful anxiety; and when the man appeared with the letter—for there was but one—she felt as if she had scarcely the power to take it from him.

‘It is from papa, I am sure,’ said Amy; but Mrs Herbert shook her head, and her face became very pale as she saw the deep black edge. With a trembling hand she tore open the letter; and Amy, seeing that something unusual was the matter, looked earnestly in her face while she read. For a moment her mother’s countenance wore the appearance of intense anguish, but it was soon succeeded by an expression of comparative relief; and when she had concluded, although she was grave and melancholy, it was evident that the news had not been what she so much dreaded.

‘Is it from papa?’ asked Amy; ‘and is he quite well, and coming home soon?’

‘It is from your uncle Harrington, my dear,’ said Mrs Herbert: ‘he gives me no information about your papa, and he writes in great distress.’

‘Why, why, mamma!’ exclaimed Amy, eagerly; ‘does it make you unhappy too?’

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Herbert; ‘I must always be sad when I know that your uncle is in affliction. You have lost your cousin Edward, Amy; he has died quite suddenly, and ——,’ but here Mrs Herbert paused, for her voice failed her. Amy endeavoured to comfort her; but it was not in her power to stop the course of her mother’s grief, and for a few minutes she gave way to it without restraint; and then rousing herself, she said, ‘I ought to be thankful that I have been spared a still greater trial; for,

though I can feel bitterly for my poor brother, it would have been far worse if I had known Edward well ; and one thing, Amy, which will give you pleasure in the midst of all this sorrow is, that your uncle tells me he intends coming to Emmerton immediately ; and he begs me to go there, and give orders for everything being prepared for them.'

'To Emmerton, mamma !' exclaimed Amy, with delight, forgetting what had given rise to this sudden plan. 'Will they really come to Emmerton—my uncle, and aunt, and all my cousins ? Oh ! you will look happy again, then.'

'I will try to do so, at least,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'for it is only selfishness to destroy your happiness, my dear child, by anxiety, which you cannot understand. But, indeed, you must not expect any great enjoyment at first ; for your uncle's letter speaks of himself and all the family as being in the greatest distress.'

'Ah ! but,' said Amy, 'when they come to Emmerton, they must be cheerful. To be sure,' she added, looking suddenly grave, 'it is very sad to think that Edward will not be with them ; but then, mamma, I dare say he is gone to heaven, so why should they be so very sorry ?'

'Should not you be very sorry to part from me, Amy, if I were to die ? and yet I trust that when it shall please God that I should do so, He will take me to heaven.'

'O mamma ! don't talk so,' said Amy, her eyes filling with tears ; 'you know I should be so miserable. I should die too.'

'No, my love,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'I hope you would not die ; for you may always be happy whether I am with you or not, when you have God to watch over you ; but I wished to show you that you must not expect other people to be less sorrowful than you would be yourself in such a situation. Your cousins will, of course, be unhappy when they first come to Emmerton.'

'But when will it be ?' asked Amy.

'Not till the week after next,' answered Mrs Herbert ; 'for the house must be made ready for them.'

'Oh ! such a long, long time !' sighed Amy. 'There are five days to the end of this week ; and then will they come on the Monday week after ?'

'They have not fixed the day, my dear, so you will try and wait patiently, I know,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'and now you must

get your lessons and read by yourself this morning, for I wish to be alone in my own room.'

This was not pleasant news to Amy, but she made no objection, and with her book in her hand seated herself at the window. It was a harder task to learn on that morning than she had ever before found it; for, notwithstanding all her endeavours, some thoughts of Emmerton would creep into her mind perpetually. First she fancied what rooms her cousins would choose; then whether they would like the same that she did; whether any of the old dark chambers would be used; and, above all, whether her uncle would have prayers in the chapel every morning, and fill it with his servants, so that she might really see it as she had been told it used to be.

The very loveliness of the day only served to increase her distraction of mind. The sunlight was glancing on the turf, the butterflies were settling continually on the flowers by the window, and the birds were singing gaily amongst the trees; and delightful as all this really was, it only made Amy feel the stronger wish to be at that moment running over the lawns at Emmerton, or standing by the side of the lake, watching the swans and the other water-fowl as they sailed proudly along on the bosom of the calm water.

'I shall never learn these tiresome lessons, mamma,' she exclaimed, as Mrs Herbert entered the room, after an absence of about a quarter of an hour.

'And why not, my love?—why should it be more difficult now than at any other time?'

'Because I am so longing to be at Emmerton, mamma, and I cannot fix my attention on them. Please let me leave off now, and I will learn a double quantity to-morrow.'

'No, Amy; that is a great mistake. To-morrow will have enough to do in its own occupations, without burdening it with those of to-day. Besides, my dear, this is just the opportunity for learning to do in a little way what will be required of you perpetually during your whole life—to conquer your own inclinations; you will be infinitely the happier for it afterwards.'

Amy looked as if she could not quite believe this, but she did not speak in reply.

'You will endeavour, I am sure, my dear child,' continued Mrs Herbert, 'if it is only to please me; you know my greatest wish is to teach you to do what is right, without thinking of what is pleasant; so make one more effort, and turn your face

from the window, that you may have nothing to divide your thoughts, and then the lessons will soon be learned.'

Mrs Herbert left the room ; and Amy, obeying her directions, seated herself with her back to the window, making a firm resolution in her own mind that she would not look up from her book till her lessons were ready ; and when her mother reappeared, they were repeated without a fault. Mrs Herbert's smile sufficiently repaid her for the exertion, and with renewed pleasure she continued her usual morning occupations.

'And now, mamma,' she exclaimed, as she finished her reading, 'I may think about Emmerton. Will you tell me if you are really going there this afternoon?'

'We will set off immediately after dinner,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'and as I cannot walk so far, I have sent to the parsonage to borrow Mr Walton's carriage.'

'Shall you stay all the afternoon, mamma ? and will you let me hear all you say to Mrs Bridget and Stephen?'

'I am afraid that will not interest you much, my dear,' replied Mrs Herbert, smiling ; 'but you deserve to have your wishes granted, to reward you for your endeavours this morning. Was I not right in saying that you would be far happier if you attended to your lessons first, and thought of your amusements afterwards?'

'Ah ! mamma,' said Amy, 'you know you are always right, and I am always wrong ; but then it does not signify so much while you are with me to teach me.'

Mrs Herbert sighed. 'You must not look to me, my dear child : I cannot keep you right. It is God alone who can do that, and He only knows how long I may live to tell you what you ought to do. But do not look so grave now, I did not mean to make you unhappy. You must get your bonnet and take one turn with me in the shady walk, and by that time dinner will be ready.'

CHAPTER II.

THAT afternoon was one of perfect enjoyment to Amy. The drive in the rector's carriage was an unusual treat, and the road through the forest had never before seemed so beautiful ; the light danced amongst the trees, and sparkled on the gay

primroses and harebells, and the deep blue violets, which peeped from amongst the thick underwood. The rich moss which covered the trunks of the old oak trees, was of a hue so bright as to be surpassed only by the vivid green of the young leaves, which had reached their full beauty, undimmed as yet by the scorching rays of the summer's sun ; and when at length they reached the park gate of Emmerton, and drove under the long rows of oak and chestnuts, and by the side of the clear silver lake, Amy's delight was unbounded. Several months had passed since she had last been there, and the beauty of the place was now increased by the thought that she should soon be able to visit it constantly, and might, perhaps, at times, spend days, and even weeks there with her cousins.

'Dear, dear mamma !' she exclaimed, as she jumped up in the carriage to look at the lake, 'do you think my uncle can be unhappy while he is here ?'

'Why should he not be, my love ?' asked Mrs Herbert.

'Oh ! because it is so beautiful, mamma,' said Amy ; 'and it is all his own, and he may go where he pleases, and do what he pleases, and you say he has plenty of money : I am sure if I were he, I should have nothing to wish for. If I lived at Emmerton, nothing could ever happen to vex me, except,' she added, looking grave, as she saw a tear in her mother's eye, 'except if anything were the matter with you : but here comes Stephen down the avenue. I wonder what he will say when he hears that my uncle is coming back ?'

The steward approached the carriage as Amy spoke ; he was a tall, hearty man, of about seventy, with a step as firm, and a back as unbent, as if he had numbered thirty years less. His features were very strongly marked, and expressive of great intelligence, and might even have been called handsome, though his complexion was completely tanned by age, and many years' exposure to the variations of the weather. There was a bright, happy look in his clear, gray eye, and a smile about his mouth, and yet a person who had watched him narrowly might have seen the trace of care on his brow ; but it seemed as if it had only recently been acquired, as if joyousness were the natural inmate of his breast, and melancholy only its occasional visitant : and so, indeed, it was. Stephen Browning had entered the service of Mrs Herbert's father when quite a lad, and had risen from being a mere stable-boy to the higher offices of groom and coachman ; he had been the instructor of the young ladies

of the family in horsemanship, and of the young gentlemen in all their boyish sports, and considered himself—and was indeed considered by many others—as the most important personage about Emmerton Hall, always excepting Mr Harrington.

During this period, his life had been a very happy one ; and the pride with which he watched the children as they grew up was scarcely inferior to that of their parents. Even the death of old Mr Harrington did not in any serious degree disturb his peace of mind, after the first shock was over ; for death, as he said, was the lot of all men, and 'twas no use to grieve for him who was gone to happiness : and so Stephen consoled himself for his loss, and still looked with delight upon the scenes he had known from his childhood, and interested himself as much in the new generation that had sprung up, as he had done in those who had long been beyond his instruction. But a most bitter trial awaited him in the removal of the family from Emmerton, and it was one for which he was totally unprepared ; the first intelligence was so astounding, that it was some time before he could be induced to believe it ; and when at last the truth forced itself upon his mind, he sank into a state of listless indifference, which was for a time in no slight degree alarming. He did, however, recover from it ; and at Mr Harrington's request consented to remain at the Hall, and to take charge of it as steward ; but his occupations, his enjoyments, all seemed gone, and his only remaining pleasure was to visit the cottage, and talk over the old days with Mrs Herbert, and tell Amy stories of the feats of her uncles and aunts in horsemanship, long before, as he said, she was ever thought of. For Mrs Bridget, the housekeeper, who had only lived about twelve years in the family, Stephen had an especial contempt. She was quite a new body, and 'twas no good talking to her ; she could not remember the good old times when the master was a young gentleman, and used to ride about the park on his Shetland pony, and learn to play at cricket and leap-frog ; and then she dressed herself out smart, with gay ribands and silks, not befitting the housekeeper of Emmerton Hall, who ought to keep to the ancient fashion ; and she would have young idle lads and lassies about the place, which was never known in his days, when everything was kept strict and in order ; and, above all, she would never admit him and his pipe into the house, but turned away when she saw it, as if she was too fine a lady to bear what he knew she must have seen a

hundred times in her father's farm kitchen. Mrs Bridget, on her part, quite returned the feeling ; and though she acknowledged that Stephen might be very honest and trustworthy, and she would not for the world say a word against any one, yet she could not help hinting occasionally that he was growing old, and would be better by his own fireside than attempting to give directions which he could know nothing about ; and certainly the air with which she was accustomed to turn her back upon him, and tell him, whenever he approached with his pipe, not to come near her with that thing in his mouth, would have been quite sufficient to deter a less adventurous person than Stephen from making a second attempt.

The steward's loud exclamation of 'Sure, 'tis young madam and little miss!' was heard when he was still at some distance from the carriage, and he turned immediately to the house with the quickest step which his age and gouty foot would allow, that he might be ready to receive them.

'Well, 'tis a strange sight, to be sure,' he said, as he lifted Amy from the carriage. 'I thought Emmerton was never going to see any of you again ; and I have said to myself fifty times within the last month, that, for certain, young madam couldn't have forgotten me, and my pretty little miss, too, who used to be here so often.'

'Ah, but Stephen,' said Amy, 'poor mamma cannot walk so far as she did, and you know we have only the rector's carriage ; but why don't you come to see us ?'

'The gout, the gout, Miss Amy, that's what keeps me ; in the old days, I could almost have run there and back in less than the hour, but 'tis all changed—house, and garden, and servants, 'tis all alike—and little it signifies what comes to me. But, madam,' he added, turning to Mrs Herbert, 'you'll be for walking in and resting yourself, and Mrs Bridget will attend upon you ; she won't let me put foot within doors, if she can help it, since I last threw some tobacco on her new gown, which was more loss to me than to her, seeing 'twas all I had, and there was nobody to send to get some more.'

'I want to talk to you first, Stephen, for a few minutes,' said Mrs Herbert.

'Ah sure, ma'am,' replied Stephen, 'and 'twill do me good to listen ; for there's no one here to whom one can talk that will understand, seeing they are all new,—all new ;' and the old man's sigh almost amounted to a groan.

'I have had a letter from your master to-day, Stephen,' said Mrs Herbert, fearing to impart too suddenly the death of his young favourite, Edward.

'Have you, ma'am? and does he say he's well, and the young gentlemen and ladies? 'Tis the best I can hope to hear now.'

'He does not write in good spirits, Stephen; he has been suffering a great deal lately.'

'Sure, ma'am, that's bad news; but what could any one expect but to be ill, away from one's own place, and all the air that's natural to one?'

'Your master has not been ill himself, Stephen; but one of his children.'

'Not master Edward!' exclaimed the old man, taking alarm from Mrs Herbert's countenance. No answer was given for a moment, and Stephen turned to Amy for an explanation. "'Tis not master Edward; it can't be. O Miss Amy! just speak.'

'I will tell you, Stephen,' said Mrs Herbert, recovering her composure. 'It will grieve you very much; but it is indeed poor Edward, who was taken ill about a week since, and is now, I trust, gone to a happier world.'

The poor old steward's bronzed complexion became of an unnatural sallow hue, and he leaned against the stone porch for support; but it seemed as if the power of utterance were taken from him.

'Run into the house and fetch a glass of water, Amy,' said Mrs Herbert; and Amy, in extreme alarm, flew to obey her mother's order.

In a few moments she returned, followed by Mrs Bridget, a gaily-dressed, sharp-visaged person of about forty, who forgot the last grievous offence against her new gown when she heard Amy's frightened exclamation, that dear old Stephen was so ill she thought he must be dying. By this time, however, the colour had returned to his cheek, and he was able to inquire more calmly the particulars of his young favourite's illness. They were few, but very painful; for the disease, which was inflammation of the lungs, brought on by a neglected cold, had made most rapid progress, and he died about two days after he had first been considered seriously ill. 'But,' said Mrs Herbert, after she had answered the old man's various questions, 'I have not told you yet, Stephen, the only thing which I think is likely now to give you pleasure: my brother talks of returning to Emmerton again to live.'

'To live, ma'am !' exclaimed Stephen, starting back ; ' but it can't be true. When the carriage drove away from this very place, now ten years ago, I said to myself they were gone for ever ; and so it has proved. 'Tis but a false hope, ma'am. The master will change his mind when he begins to forget his grief.'

' Ah, but Stephen,' said Amy, taking his hand affectionately, ' it is not a false hope, though ; for mamma heard all about it this morning, and she has come now to tell you and Bridget to get the things in order, and they are to be here the week after next. Think of that, Stephen. Won't that make you happy ?'

' Poor master Edward ! poor master Edward !' sighed the old steward ; ' 'twould have been a joyful day, indeed, if he had been coming too. To have looked upon his young face again would have added ten years to my life ; but God's will be done !'

' But, Stephen,' said Amy, half disappointed, ' you are not as much pleased as I thought you would be.'

' Ah, little Miss,' replied Stephen, as he patted her shoulder, ' you are too young to know anything about sorrow ; but I shall be glad by and by, when I can think that it is true.'

' Indeed, indeed, it is true,' repeated Amy ; ' and mamma knows it.'

' Amy is right, Stephen,' said Mrs Herbert. ' My brother writes me word that Wayland Court is now become so melancholy to him, that he cannot bear to live there, and he intends being at Emmerton as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made.'

' God be thanked for it !' exclaimed Stephen, clasping his hands together ; ' and I shall go to my grave in peace, for the old times will be come back again. But no, they won't, though, he added, whilst a bitter recollection flashed upon his mind. ' He will never be here again : ' and he brushed his hand across his eye to wipe away the tear which glistened in it.

Mrs Bridget, half annoyed that Mrs Herbert should have chosen to communicate so important a piece of intelligence to Stephen rather than to herself, now came forward, and in a formal manner, and with a voice which told there was a storm within, said, ' I suppose, madam, my master and mistress will communicate with me before they arrive ?'

' I believe not, Bridget,' replied Mrs Herbert ; ' they are in too much distress to think about anything now ; but they have

left it all to me, and I was wishing to ask you what would be wanting.'

'Nothing, ma'am,' said Bridget, drawing up her head rather proudly, 'nothing at all. Though I say it that shouldn't say it, the house is just in as perfect order now as it was when my master went away. But I should like to know if my mistress would choose to have the coverings taken off the furniture in the great drawing-room; and there have been a few breakages in the bedrooms; and Stephen tells me there is a pane of glass out of the conservatory; and the fringe of the curtains in the saloon was torn yesterday by the girl who was here cleaning the rooms. I scolded her well for it, and she is coming again to-morrow to mend it.'

'Well,' said Mrs Herbert, stopping her, 'all these things you can quite well manage yourself, they are but trifles. You had better get all the rooms in order, for I do not at all know which they will choose.'

'And the chapel, mamma,' said Amy, 'won't Bridget have the chapel cleaned? When I was last in it, there was such a heap of dust on the old monument near the door.'

Bridget looked annoyed. 'The chapel is not my department, Miss Amy; it was given in particular charge to Stephen's niece by Mrs Harrington herself; but she is an idle trolloping girl, and always neglects. Stephen,' she added, turning to the old man, who appeared quite absorbed in his own thoughts,—'Stephen, Miss Amy declares the chapel is dusty.'

The steward started up like a man awakened from a dream; and catching only the meaning of the last word of the sentence, exclaimed—'Dusty! and whose fault is that, pray?'

'Whose, but that fine lady's your niece?' said Bridget, giving way to an irritation of temper which she did not dare to exhibit to Mrs Herbert, and delighted at having something to find fault with. 'She is so busy all day with her flounces and her furbelows, that she has no time to think of her work.'

Stephen, now fully alive to everything, looked steadily at Mrs Bridget as she said this; and then scanning her from head to foot with a half contemptuous smile, muttered—'Not so very different from other people,' and walked away, though it was only a few paces, for his angry feelings were very soon subdued.

'I should like to go over the house, Bridget,' said Mrs Herbert; 'and after that, perhaps, you will get us some tea; for the evening is so fine we need not return home till late.'

‘Dear mamma,’ said Amy, ‘may we have it in your own room? I should so enjoy it! you know I like it better than any in the whole house.’

Mrs Herbert made no objection; for although there were many melancholy ideas connected with this room, yet she felt like Amy, that to her it had more charms than any other.

It was in nearly the oldest part of the house, and had been occupied by herself and her favourite sister from the time when she was about fifteen, and was considered old enough to leave the schoolroom, and yet too young to go into society. Her mother had fitted it up for them with everything that could be required for their enjoyment; and here they had been accustomed to spend their mornings together free from interruption, for it was so far removed from the more modern buildings that even the sounds of the visitors’ carriages could scarcely reach them. The deep oriel window looked out on the quietest and loveliest part of the pleasure-ground; and a private door opening upon it, afforded them a free and unobserved access to the garden; and many were the hours which Mrs Herbert had spent with her sister Edith, reading together under the shade of the large elm trees, with not a thought or wish beyond the enjoyment of the present moment.

The room was now deserted. The piano was still in its accustomed place, but its rich, full tone had become wiry and harsh by time. The table was still standing by the window, but its clear polish had a cold, repulsive appearance. There were no books, no work, no flowers. The chairs were ranged in regular order against the empty bookshelves; the gay colours of the curtains and ottomans were faded; and, instead of the bright smile and the merry laugh which had once greeted Mrs Herbert, there was nothing now to tell of the companion of her childhood but the picture which hung over the fire-place.

But Mrs Herbert did not complain: she had early left a home of happiness for one which was even more delightful to her; and her sister, who had married likewise, was still in the possession of health and prosperity. She had, therefore, much cause for thankfulness; and yet she never entered this room and recollected the pleasures of her youth, without a pang, which became the more painful when her husband’s long-continued absence gave her so great a cause of anxiety.

Amy’s associations with what had generally been called the oriel room were of a more cheerful character. She had never known it different from what it now was; and to her it only

brought the remembrance of many happy hours spent there with her mother, in their occasional visits to Emmerton, and particularly of various incidents in Mrs Herbert's early life, which were almost sure to be recalled by some object or circumstance connected with it. With a secret hope that something of this kind would complete the pleasures of the day, she now followed her mother through the silent, deserted chambers, while directions were given for everything which might render them more comfortable ; but at last, wearied with listening, she left Mrs Herbert's side, and wandered by herself into the pleasure-ground, till she became so tired that she was glad to find her way back to the oriel room, where Mrs Bridget, whose great favourite she was (and it was the only point on which Bridget and Stephen agreed), had prepared the tea, and spread the table with fresh fruit and cakes. This was not, to Amy, at all an unpleasing sight ; and when Mrs Herbert came in, she felt quite inclined to begin her evening meal ; but they had scarcely seated themselves when Amy started back, exclaiming, ' O mamma ! pray look there. Did you ever see such a wretched little object ? '

Mrs Herbert turned to the window, and saw a miserable girl, with a pale, haggard countenance and covered with rags, holding out her hand and begging for charity.

' Dear mamma ! do give her something,' said Amy ; ' she looks so dreadfully hungry.'

' I will ask her a few questions first,' replied Mrs Herbert, ' and find out where she comes from, and then we shall know what is best to be done for her. I suppose she found her way into the pleasure-ground through the back lane and the kitchen-garden.'

Mrs Herbert opened the window ; and, beckoning to the girl to approach, made several inquiries as to her parents, her home, and her present necessities. She seemed sadly frightened ; but answered without hesitation, that her father, who was a common labourer, had lately died, leaving a wife and six children, of whom she was the eldest. It was her mother's wish to return to her parish, thinking she should be better provided for there than amongst strangers. She had set out on the journey ; but, being taken very ill, she had been obliged to stop at a village about a mile and a half distant, where she had spent all her money, and now, being totally destitute, she had sent her child to beg for some assistance.

' What will you do for her, mamma ? ' whispered Amy.

‘I must know a little more about her before I decide,’ replied Mrs Herbert. ‘Is there no one in the village,’ she added, speaking to the girl, ‘who has helped your mother?’

‘The clergyman’s lady has been very good to us, ma’am,’ was the reply; ‘but the people of the house want mother to pay for the lodging, and she has no money.’

‘It is a sad case, if it be true,’ said Mrs Herbert; ‘but I will make some inquiries to-morrow; and now you shall take home something for your supper; and I will write to the lady who has been so kind to you, and, if you have spoken the truth, she will give your mother something for me.’

The girl curtsied, and seemed pleased and grateful; and Amy, whilst her mother was writing a note, begged that she might take her round to Bridget’s room, and give her her supper before she returned home; and when the girl had left the house with some bread and a bone of meat, Amy went back to her own comfortable meal with a much higher sense of the greatness of her daily blessings than she had had a quarter of an hour before.

The idea, however, of so much poverty and suffering in some degree diminished her enjoyment, and she sat for a while thoughtful and silent. At length, turning suddenly to Mrs Herbert, she exclaimed—

‘Mamma, it is very strange that some people are so poor and others so rich!’

‘It does seem so at first,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘and we can only account for it by saying, that it is the will of God; that He alone knows what is good for us all, and therefore He ordains different things for different people; and though we consider poverty an evil, yet it is often a very great good, and makes people think of Him and love Him, when they would otherwise forget Him.’

‘But there is such a great, great difference in people,’ said Amy; ‘that poor woman has not a farthing, and my uncle Harrington has thousands a-year, you have told me.’

‘So he has,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘and yet, in a few years, they may both, perhaps, be equally rich.’

‘O mamma! how can that be possible?’ exclaimed Amy.

‘It may be true to a certain extent, at this very moment, my dear. You know what is meant by being an heir—having a right to certain property or money, which is to be received at some future period. Now, it is more than probable that your

uncle with all his riches, and that poor woman in the midst of her sufferings, have both the same expectations for the future.'

'Not on earth, mamma!' observed Amy.

'No, my love,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'but a person is not the less an heir because he will not receive his inheritance until he is admitted to heaven. I remember that I first learned to think upon this subject when I was about two years younger than you are now.'

'Do tell me how, mamma!' exclaimed Amy, her eyes sparkling with delight: 'it must be one of your stories about the time when you were a little girl.'

'It is not quite a story, Amy, and, at any rate, it is rather a grave one; so, perhaps, we had better wait till you are quite in the humour.'

'Oh! but I am quite in the humour always, mamma; and I think I like grave stories best. Will it be a long one?'

'No,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'neither long nor amusing, and yet, perhaps, it may interest you, as it may help to explain a subject on which you have often heard me speak, and which it is very necessary you should understand and think about.'

'The time I am going to tell you of was, as I mentioned just now, when I was about ten years old and your uncle Harrington one-and-twenty. Persons at that age are, you know, considered capable of taking care of their property; and the day of their attaining it is very often marked by great rejoicings, in the case of those who have the expectation of a large inheritance. This was your uncle's situation, and great preparations were made for several weeks before, that the event might be properly celebrated. Invitations were sent to all our friends, who were then very numerous, and many came from a distance to spend some days with us. A dinner was to be given to the tenants and the school children; there were to be fireworks let off from the terrace in the evening, and a band of music was engaged for the occasion;—and all this was to do honour to my brother. You may imagine how much I was interested in it, and how very delightful I thought it must be to be in his place. I do not think I ever longed for anything in my whole life so much as I did for the arrival of this day. I could talk of nothing else,—I could think of nothing else; and I am afraid I gave my governess, Miss Harwood, very much trouble for a whole week, I was so inattentive to my lessons. At length it came—the long-wished-for twenty-ninth of June; and certainly it was as lovely a day as I could possibly

have desired. I remember waking very early, and jumping out of my bed to look at the weather. The sky was of a deep rich blue, with only a faint mist over the distance, foretelling the heat of the noonday. From my window I could see far over the country, and everything that I could distinctly view was my father's property. I called to my sister Edith, and made her come to the window, to enjoy the perfect beauty of the morning; and I can well recollect saying to her, with a half-envious sigh, "Should you not like to be Charles, and to think that all this was to be your own?" Your aunt, Amy, was of a very sweet, contented disposition, and she checked me for the wish, and said that she was thankful for her brother's blessings, but she could hardly desire them for herself,—she was afraid she should not make a good use of them. We stood for some time together; but said very little, for there was such a perfect stillness reigning around that it almost seemed as if it would be wrong to break it. Presently, however, we heard the sound of distant music; it came nearer and nearer, and we soon recognised the sweet voices of the village children, who had been sent to pay this first mark of respect to their young master.

'I cannot describe how beautiful it sounded to me, though perhaps it was only because I was in a state of such excitement, and so inclined to find delight in everything; but I know that I listened to it with breathless attention, and when I turned to look at Edith, there was a tear in her eye, and I do not think that she, though so much calmer in disposition, has ever forgotten, any more than myself, the tones of that simple hymn.'

'But, mamma,' interrupted Amy, 'the children never sing so beautifully now?'

'I do not mean, my dear,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'that the music was really so very much better than what I had usually heard, though I dare say they had had a great deal of pains taken with them. But you will find, as you grow older, that many things which are in themselves common, will appear delightful to you if you are inclined to be particularly happy; and so it was with me on that morning. Edith and myself stayed so long at the window, even after the children's singing was over, that we were only just dressed by the time the bell rang for morning prayers, and when we entered the chapel, it was quite full. All the servants of the family, with those of our numerous guests and a few of my father's tenants, were ranged on the long oaken benches in the aisle; the seats for the gentlemen were occupied

by my father, my brother, and their friends ; and the ladies' gallery, in which we were, was also crowded. I felt quite frightened when I went in, for many of those present were strangers to me, having arrived late the night before ; but I took my place between Edith and Miss Harwood, and the service began. It was read by my brother's tutor, a clergyman who lived in the family ; and when it was over, the party assembled in the breakfast-room, but we were considered too young to join it, and we came back to what was then the schoolroom—the very room in which we now are, Amy—to be with Miss Harwood and the younger children till it should be time for us to wait upon the poor people, who were to have a dinner given them on the lawn, in front of the house. All that I could think of was the grandeur of my brother's situation, and the pleasure of having so many persons assembled to do honour to oneself. I could not fix my attention to anything, but could only count the hours till two o'clock, and run occasionally to the top of the great staircase to look at what was going on below, for preparations were making on a large scale for the evening's entertainment ; servants were constantly passing and repassing, and I heard my brother's name repeated by almost every one. At length Edith and I were told to go into the servants' hall, where the school children were to meet, and to place them in order, that they might walk regularly, two and two, to the ground where the dinner was laid. This was to me most welcome news ; for I was tired of being nearly the only useless person in the midst of so much bustle, and we spent at least a quarter of an hour endeavouring to make them understand which were to go together, and how they were to behave, and distributing some little coloured banners which we had amused ourselves with preparing for the occasion ; and when the great bell sounded, Edith and myself walked before them to the ground. My father and his guests were assembled on the terrace, and my brother stood by my father's side exactly in the centre. The children and their parents, and the rest of the tenants, were ranged at their several tables ; and then, when the steward had called for silence, they all rose, and my father spoke to them, in a voice so clear that I think it must have been heard by every one. He told them of the gratification it was to him to see them all before him, and of the certainty he felt of their good-will towards him, with many more expressions of the same kind ; and then, taking my brother by the hand, he led him forward to the edge of the terrace, and

presented him to them as his heir, and their future master, saying that he trusted he would always prove himself their true friend ; and that when he should be laid in his grave, my brother might receive from them, and from their children, the same marks of sincere attachment which they had always shown to himself.

‘A general burst of applause followed this speech of my father’s, and the words “Long live the young master !” were heard from every lip ; even the children joined in the cry ; and when the excitement had a little subsided, my brother also spoke. He was extremely frightened, and I could not hear all that he said ; but I was told afterwards that he thanked them for their reception of him, and added that he hoped it would be very long before he should be called on to act as their master ; but that, when that time should arrive, it would be his one earnest endeavour to follow his father’s footsteps. As he concluded, another loud cheer was given by the tenants, and just as it was dying away I heard a voice behind me say, in a deep, suppressed tone, “May God in heaven bless him ! and may he one day be the possessor of a far richer inheritance !” I was quite startled at the solemnity with which the words were spoken, and I did not at the moment understand their meaning. They seemed to be quite involuntary, and were certainly not intended to be overheard ; and I turned quickly to see who was near. I was standing between the two tables, and on my right hand was a young man whose face I did not at all recollect. He appeared about my brother’s age ; but instead of Charles’ healthy complexion and strong limbs, he looked completely worn by disease. There was not the slightest tinge of colour in his cheeks ; his eyes were deep sunk in his head, and even his lips were of an ashy paleness, and the hand by which he supported himself, as he leant rather than stood against the table, was more like that of a skeleton than of a living being ; his clothes were neat and clean, but showed marks of great poverty ; and, in fact, I had seldom seen such indications of extreme sickness and want.’

‘Poor man !’ exclaimed Amy ; ‘was he really unhappy, mamma ?’

‘No, my love,’ replied Mrs Herbert. ‘I was just going to tell you that, notwithstanding all these symptoms of suffering, he looked perfectly contented, and there was even a smile upon his face. I watched him as he seated himself after the speeches were ended, and saw that he was quite exhausted ; he ate little or nothing ; and, before the dinner was over, he was obliged to leave

the ground, assisted by an elderly woman, whom I knew very well, and who was in very distressed circumstances. I could not help thinking, as he slowly walked away, of the vast difference there was between him and my brother in everything ; and the same question arose in my mind which you asked me just now, Amy, "Why God should make some people rich and others poor?" but there was no one near me then to answer it. The remainder of the afternoon was spent by us in setting the village children to play, and resting ourselves in the schoolroom. And when the heat of the day began to lessen, and we knew that the company were at dinner, Miss Harwood proposed that we should go to the top of the hill at the side of the house, which was our favourite walk, where we should probably see a magnificent sunset, and return in time to be dressed for the drawing-room.

'I was so restless, that it was a great relief to have some occupation found for me, and I enjoyed the thought of the cool evening air after the fatigue and sultriness of the morning ; and I determined also that I would, if I could manage it, get Miss Harwood alone, and ask her to explain what had so puzzled me, and find out from her who the poor man was who had left the table, for his face seemed constantly before me, with its expression of great suffering, and yet of quiet happiness. Edith and I set out together ; but I soon left her with the others, searching for wild flowers, and joined Miss Harwood. We easily outstripped them, and reached the top of the hill long before they had half filled their baskets. Miss Harwood always noticed any change in us, and she asked me why I was so fond of getting away from the rest, and whether I should not be much happier with them than with her. I had no concealment from her any more than you have from me, Amy, and I told her directly what I wanted to ask her, and how I had wondered to see that poor man apparently so destitute when my brother had everything that the world could give him. She gave me very much the same answer that I have given you, that it was the will of God, and that He knew what was good for us, and often sent us sufferings to teach us to think of Him ; and then she added that she knew the poor man well, and had been present when he and my brother had both been declared heirs of a far richer inheritance than any that my father had to bestow. I felt surprised ; and the exclamation I had heard in the morning, and which before I had scarcely thought of, flashed upon my memory. I supposed Miss Harwood's words must have some allusion to it, though I could not

understand how ; and I eagerly asked why the poor man did not obtain any benefit from his inheritance. "He does obtain a great benefit from it at this moment," replied Miss Harwood, almost sadly ; "and I do not doubt that, in a very short time, he will be admitted to possess at least a portion of it." You may imagine how desirous I was of having this mystery explained ; but when I looked at Miss Harwood, I saw that she was thinking of something very serious, and a sudden notion of her meaning came into my mind. "You mean an inheritance in heaven?" I said, half doubting whether I might not be wrong. A smile of pleasure passed across Miss Harwood's face as she answered, "Yes, Ellen, you are quite right ; and I will tell you what I meant when I said that he was made an heir of heaven. It is now many years ago, I was staying at Emmerton, soon after your brother's birth, and long before I thought of ever being a governess. On the day on which he was baptized I went with your father, and several of his friends, to the village church. I stood at the font with the godfathers and his godmother (who, you know, are called sponsors), and I heard the clergyman ask them some very solemn questions, which they were required to answer in your brother's name. He then took him in his arms, sprinkled him with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and marked on his forehead the sign of the cross ; and, giving him back to his nurse, he declared him to be one of that society or set of persons who form what is called the Church, and to whom God has promised His kingdom. From that moment," continued Miss Harwood, "your brother was made a Christian and an heir of glory, such as we cannot imagine ; the sins of his original evil nature were forgiven him, and a new spirit was implanted in him ; and when I looked at him, as he lay in his nurse's arms, I could not help thinking that it would be happier for him if it were to please God to take him at once to Himself, before he could by any sin of his own forfeit his innocence, and risk the loss of his eternal inheritance. But," she added, "he was not the only one who on that day received the promise of the kingdom of heaven. Besides our own party, there stood by the font four of our poor neighbours, some, indeed, of the poorest in the parish. One of them held a sickly-looking infant, wrapped in a coarse kind of cloak ; and when Charles had been baptized, this child was given to the clergyman. The same questions were asked, the same water was sprinkled upon him, the same words were pronounced, the

same sign was marked on his forehead, and then he also was restored to his parents, a Christian, and an heir of everlasting happiness. Notwithstanding the vast difference in their outward circumstances, there was none in the eye of God; both had received infinite blessings, both were engaged to keep the most solemn promises.

“Your brother, Ellen,” continued Miss Harwood, “has grown up in the midst of every earthly luxury, and has to-day been declared heir to a splendid property: the other child was bred in poverty, and accustomed to the severest privations. He was early obliged to leave his home, and work for his livelihood amongst strangers; and now he has returned to his mother, who is a widow, and nearly destitute, completely broken in health, and with no prospect before him but that of a speedy death. Which do you think is the more to be envied?”

‘I was silent, for I knew that I would far rather be my brother, the possessor of health and riches, than a poor man in need of everything. Do you think I was right, Amy?’

‘If the poor man went to heaven, mamma,’ said Amy, ‘I suppose he would have everything there that he could desire?’

‘Yes, my love,’ replied Mrs Herbert, ‘he would indeed; and yet, though I knew this then as you do now, I could not easily forget all the respect that I had seen shown to my brother that morning, and I did not like to say anything that was not true.

‘Miss Harwood waited for a few moments, and then said, “Look, Ellen, at the park, and the woods beneath us, and the pretty little village beyond—you know it is all your father’s—is it not very lovely?”

“Yes!” I replied, surprised at the question.

“But now look farther,” said Miss Harwood; “do you not see what a vast extent of country there is on the other side, stretching away till it reaches the sea? The owner of all that property would be a much greater person than even your father.”

“Yes, indeed he would,” I said, as I turned in the direction to which she pointed.

“But now, Ellen, look once more,” said Miss Harwood, “over the sea into the sky—look at that mass of brilliant purple and golden clouds, behind which the sun is now sinking; do you not see, far away to the right, a pale bright star?—it is the only one which has yet appeared; but in a short time the whole firmament will be studded with millions and millions like it. Each of

those stars is, as you well know, a world; and we may believe infinitely more perfect than ours. If it be a great thing to be the child of one who owns so beautiful an estate as your father, must it not be a far greater to be the child of Him who not merely owns, but who created those glorious worlds?"

"But my brother," I said, "was made the child of God as well as that poor man."

"Yes," replied Miss Harwood; "and we may hope that when it shall be the will of God that he should die, he also may inherit the blessing which has been promised him, but his trial is yet to come: he may be tempted to do wrong, and forget God, and he may, therefore, lose it; but that poor man's trial will in all probability soon be over. I know that he has endeavoured to keep the vow made for him at his baptism, and trusts only to the merits of his Saviour for salvation, and therefore I have but little fear for him; but I do feel for your brother, because I know he is in the midst of great temptations."

'These words sounded very strangely to me,—it seemed as if Miss Harwood were pitying Charles, instead of envying him, as I did; and I was going to ask her some more questions, when Edith and my other sisters came running towards us, telling us that they had gathered a most beautiful nosegay, and wished now to return home. They began laughing at me for running away from them; but they could not make me join in their merriment, for I could only think of all that Miss Harwood had been saying; and even when we reached the house, and were dressed for the evening, I still remembered it.

'The large saloon was lighted up when we entered, and there were a great many people assembled, all gaily dressed, and walking up and down whilst the band was playing. My brother was noticed by every one, and was evidently considered the chief person, and I felt that I should have been happy to be him; but then Miss Harwood's words recurred to my mind, and I became thoughtful; for I knew that although he might be the heir of earthly grandeur, yet that, if he were to do wrong, and lose the promise of heaven, he must be miserable. We were not allowed to stay very long, Amy, and therefore I cannot give you a great description of the ball. I only remember how very tired I was when I went to bed, and that my last thoughts were of my conversation with Miss Harwood, and of my brother and the poor man.'

'Is that all, mamma?' said Amy.

‘Yes, my dear,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘you know I told you it was not a very interesting story.’

‘I did not mean that, mamma,’ said Amy; ‘for I have liked it very much; but I was thinking of the poor man. Did you never see him again?’

‘Only once,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘for he was too ill, after that day, to leave his home. It was one afternoon when I had been with Miss Harwood into the village; and, as we were returning, we passed his cottage door; he was seated at it, supported by pillows, and looking even worse than on the day of the fête. Miss Harwood had a basket of fruit for him, and she stopped and talked to him for some little time. I cannot tell you all that passed, Amy, for I did not entirely understand it myself, and some of it was too solemn to be repeated again; but I well remember the peaceful expression of the poor man’s countenance, and that he said he would not exchange his prospect of happiness for anything earth could give; he also mentioned my brother, and seemed to feel a great interest for him. But there was nothing like envy at what appeared to me so much more desirable a lot: he looked, and indeed he was, perfectly contented; and a few days after, I was told by Miss Harwood that he was dead.’

‘And what became of his mother?’ asked Amy.

‘She is living still in the village, and in the same cottage; for although it is almost a hovel, she cannot afford anything more comfortable: and I hardly think she would change it if she could; for she has often said to me, that it was there her husband and her child died, and she should never love any place so well. But you have frequently seen her, my dear; do you not remember the little thatched cottage next the blacksmith’s shop, and the old woman we often notice spinning at the door?’

‘Oh yes,’ said Amy,—‘old widow Watson; but she is very cheerful.’

‘She has the same cause for cheerfulness that her son had,’ replied Mrs Herbert. ‘But now, Amy, do you understand from my story why I said that the mother of the poor little ragged girl we saw just now has probably as great a prospect of future happiness as your uncle Harrington?’

‘Yes, mamma, if she has been baptized: but we are not sure of that.’

‘We may hope that she has been,’ replied her mother; ‘but that which I am most desirous you should think of, is not so

much the case of that poor child as your own. You can have no doubt of your baptism, and you may therefore feel quite certain of having had a promise made to you ; and when you grow older, and begin to know what the troubles of life really are, you will be able to appreciate the blessing of having something to hope for and expect beyond the pleasures of the world.'

'Everybody who is grown up talks of having had a great deal of sorrow, mamma,' said Amy ; 'and so I suppose it is true : and sometimes I feel quite frightened, and wish I could be always young ; for I am very happy now, and when my cousins come, I do not think I shall ever want anything more.'

Mrs Herbert looked rather grave as she answered, 'I am afraid, my dear, that your cousins' arrival may make a great change in many of your ideas. They have been brought up very differently from you, and you will see them dressed in fine clothes, and with servants to wait on them, and carriages to drive about in ; and then, perhaps, you will become envious and discontented.'

'O mamma !' exclaimed Amy, 'how can you think so, when I shall have you with me ?'

'I wish I could teach you, my love, how much better it is to be the child of God than to be my child,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'I should have no fears for you then ; for you would not care for the grandeur and riches which you will see your cousins possess, and you would always be happy whether I were with you or not.'

'Mamma,' said Amy, 'you have often talked lately of my living without you ; but it makes me so very miserable to think of it, I wish you would not mention it.'

'You must not give way to this kind of feeling, my dear child,' answered her mother ; 'for we must bear whatever God thinks fit to appoint. But I cannot talk any more now : you shall go into the garden till the carriage is ready, and leave me alone, for I am sadly tired.'

'I do not like to leave you,' said Amy, 'you look so pale and ill ; and you never used to do so. Oh, how I wish——,' but here she stopped, fearing lest the mention of her father's name might increase her mother's grief.

You need not be afraid,' replied Mrs Herbert, with a half smile, though she well knew what was uppermost in her child's mind ; 'all that I require is rest and quiet.'

Amy said no more, but placed a glass of water by her mother's side, and left the room.

When she was gone, Mrs Herbert closed her eyes, and seemed as if endeavouring to sleep ; but the working of her forehead, and the pressure of her lips, showed that there was no repose of the mind. Solitude only brought before her more clearly the image of her husband in a distant land—perhaps ill and unhappy, it might be dying ; but it was necessary for her own health, and for Amy's happiness, that she should struggle against these sad forebodings ; and although a few tears at first rolled slowly down her cheek, and she felt that it was almost impossible to prevent herself from giving way to her grief, she did at length succeed in turning her mind to the consideration of the watchful providence and mercy of God ; and by the time Amy returned with the announcement that the carriage was ready, she had quite regained her tranquillity.

Stephen was at the door as they drove off, and bade them good-bye with a happier look than was his wont ; though, when Amy asked him if he were not delighted at the thought of all the carriages and horses he should soon see, he scarcely smiled as he answered, ' Ah ! yes, Miss Amy, 'twill be very fine ; but there will be no one now to ride the Shetland pony in the park ; ' and he turned his head and walked quickly away. Mrs Bridget's civilities, now that she knew how much depended on Mrs Herbert's good opinion, were greater than usual ; and many were the hopes she expressed that everything had been satisfactory in the house, and that dear little Miss Amy had liked the cake and strawberries. But Mrs Herbert was too tired to listen long to her speeches, and expressed her approbation in few words ; and Amy, who liked Stephen a great deal better than Bridget, declared that it was all quite delicious, and then ran after the old steward to say good-bye once more.

CHAPTER III.

' **T**HERE are only six days now, mamma,' said Amy, as she sat at work by her mother's side, about a week after their visit to Emmerton ; ' only six days, and then my cousins will be come ; but they seem dreadfully long ; and I have been thinking, too, that perhaps I shall not be liked ; and if so, you know all my pleasure will be at an end.'

‘You had better not think anything about that, my dear,’ answered Mrs Herbert; ‘it is nearly the certain way of preventing yourself from being agreeable. If you are good-natured and sweet-tempered, there is very little doubt of your being liked; but if you make any great efforts to please, you will probably be led into saying and doing things that are not quite natural, and you will at once become disagreeable; besides, you may be tempted to act wrongly in order to suit your cousins’ inclinations. You know, Amy, we ought to try not to be liked, but to be good.’

‘But will you just tell me everything about my cousins, mamma, that I may know what to expect? There will be Dora, and Margaret, and Frank, and Rose; four of them. Now, what will Dora be like?’

‘I really can tell you very little,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘it is a long time since I have seen any of them, and you have heard almost as much as I have. Dora, I believe, has been brought forward a good deal, and probably, therefore, considers herself older than she really is; she must be more than fourteen, and I should think would not be so much your companion as Margaret, who is a year younger. Frank you will not see a great deal of, as he is at school the chief part of the year; though, perhaps, now, the difference of his position in the family may make some change in his father’s plans for him. Little Rose, who is not quite six, is the pet of the whole house, and especially doated upon by her mother; and this is nearly all the information I can give you.’

‘And will the young lady I have so often heard you speak of come with them, or will my aunt teach them as you do me?’

‘She will come with them, I have no doubt,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘for although your aunt objects to a regular governess, and has educated your cousins almost entirely herself, yet, lately, Miss Morton has assisted her very much in their music and drawing.’

‘Miss Morton is the daughter of a clergyman who lived very near Wayland—is she not, mamma?’ said Amy.

‘Yes,’ answered her mother. ‘He died suddenly, and his wife only survived him about a month, and this poor girl was left quite unprovided for. Some of her relations interested themselves for her, and placed her at a very excellent school, where she had great advantages; and having a superior talent for music and drawing, she made very rapid progress. When

she was nearly nineteen, she entered your uncle's family, and has lived with them now for two years.'

'Will she be with them always?' asked Amy, 'or will she have separate rooms, as I have heard most governesses have?'

'I believe she has been accustomed to have a sitting-room to herself,' said Mrs Herbert; 'or, at least the schoolroom has been considered hers, and she seldom joins the rest of the party.'

'Poor thing!' said Amy; 'without any father or mother, it must be very sad in the long winter evenings.'

Mrs Herbert thought the same, but she did not wish to express her opinion; and Amy, having finished her work, was told to go and prepare for a walk, her mother being glad to find an excuse for breaking off the conversation, and so avoiding any further questions.

The arrival of her brother's family was, indeed, a subject of anxious consideration for Mrs Herbert. It must have a great influence on Amy's mind, either for good or evil; and there was much reason to fear that the evil would preponderate. Mr Harrington was a man of high honour and extreme benevolence; but he was constitutionally indolent, and had allowed his wife to gain so much influence over him, that the management of everything was chiefly in her hands. It certainly might have been entrusted to worse, for Mrs Harrington had good judgment, superior sense in all worldly affairs, and a never-failing activity. Her establishment was the best ordered, her dinners were the best dressed, her farm and dairy were the best supplied of any in the county—all was in a style of first-rate elegance, without any pretension or extravagance, but when she attempted to apply her sense and her activity to the management of her children, she failed essentially, for the one thing was wanting—she had no real principle of religion.

She had, it is true, taken care that they should be taught their Catechism, almost as soon as they could speak; but she had never endeavoured to explain to them its meaning; they had been accustomed to repeat a hasty prayer every morning and evening, but they had never learned how solemn a duty they were performing; and every Sunday they had been in the habit of reading a chapter in the Bible, but it was hurried through without the smallest thought, partly as a task, and partly as a means of passing away the time. If it had not been for this great deficiency, Mrs Harrington would have been well calculated for the task of education; caring, however, only for accomplishments

which might make a show in the world, she considered the cultivation of her children's minds a matter of secondary importance ; and although she was desirous they should be clever and well-read, that they might appear to advantage in society, she thought very little of the effect their studies might have upon their general character.

From these circumstances, as might easily be supposed, Dora and Margaret grew up with all their natural evil inclinations unchecked and the good unimproved. Dora's temper, originally haughty, had become year by year more overbearing, as she found that, from her father's rank and fortune, and from being herself the eldest daughter of the family, she could exact attention, not only from her brothers and sisters, but from most of her playmates, and all the servants and dependents ; and if occasionally she excited her mother's displeasure, when a music lesson had been particularly bad, or a drawing very carelessly executed, her talents easily enabled her to regain that place in Mrs Harrington's affection, which depended so much upon external superiority. And yet, under good guidance, Dora Harrington might have become a very admirable person. Her disposition was generous and candid, and her feelings were warm and easily excited ; but her pride and self-will had hitherto marred every better quality.

Margaret was very different : she was more inclined to be gentle and yielding, but this rather from indolence than amiability ; and her vanity and selfishness rendered her, perhaps, even less agreeable than her sister, when she became more intimately known. There was, indeed, one peculiarity about her, which, on a first acquaintance, was very winning—a great desire of gaining the love of others ! and for this purpose she would use the most affectionate expressions, and profess the greatest interest in their happiness ; but her young companions soon found that she was seldom willing to make the sacrifice of her own inclinations to theirs ; and persons who were older, and could see deeper into her character, discovered that her love of affection differed but little from her love of admiration, as she only valued it because it gained her attention ; and the same vanity which made her delight in the praises of her delicate complexion, and fair hair, and bright blue eyes, made her also take pleasure in knowing that she was an object of interest and regard to those around her.

Such were probably to be Amy's companions for the next few years of her life, Rose being too young to be considered of the number ; and it was well for Mrs Herbert's happiness that she

was little aware of their dispositions. Yet she had some fears as to the principle on which her nieces had been educated ; and she could not but be thankful that she should, as she hoped, be at hand for at least some time to come, to watch the effect of the intimacy upon Amy's mind, and to warn her against any evil which might result from it ; as she felt that, in the event of her own death and her husband's prolonged absence, it would be upon her brother's family alone that she could depend for friendship and protection to her almost orphan child.

Amy herself, with all the thoughtlessness of her age, looked forward to nothing but enjoyment ; and when the first rays of the sun shone through her window, on the morning of the day that was to witness her meeting with her cousins, and awakened her from her quiet sleep and her peaceful dreams, it was only to give her the expectation of a yet brighter reality. For the next hour she lay awake, imagining the grandeur of Emmerton Hall in its best furniture, the delight of driving in her uncle's carriage, and the probability that she might have beautiful presents made her,—new books, or a watch, or a pony, or, what would be still better, a pony-chaise for her mamma, now that she was unable to walk far. She even went on to count up the books she should wish for, and to settle the colour of the pony, not doubting that her uncle would be willing to give her everything ; for she had always been told he was very kind ; and a person who could live at Emmerton, she was sure, must be able to purchase whatever he desired.

'O mamma, I am so happy !' was her first exclamation, as she seated herself at the breakfast-table. 'Do see what a beautiful day it is ; and I have been awake so long this morning, thinking over what we shall do in the afternoon. I am sure you must be happy too.'

'Happy to see you so, my love,' said Mrs Herbert, as she kissed her.

'But why not happy in yourself, mamma ; are you ill ?' and she looked at Mrs Herbert anxiously ; then suddenly becoming grave, she said, 'Dear mamma, it was very wrong in me, but I did not think about poor Edward.'

'It was very natural, my dear, and you need not be distressed because you cannot feel for him as I do, who knew him when he was a healthy, merry child, the delight of every one.'

'Then there is no harm in being happy ?' said Amy ; 'but I will try to be so to myself, though I should like you to smile

too ; but, perhaps, you will when you see them quite settled at Emmerton.'

'I hope every one will be reconciled to the loss in time,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'and, perhaps, Amy, it will be a greater pleasure to me, by and by, to know that your uncle is so near than it will be to you.'

'O mamma ! how can that be ? you know you are so much older ; and you always tell me that grown-up people do not enjoy things so much as children.'

'But supposing, my dear, that your cousins' being at Emmerton should make you envious and discontented with your own home, you would not be happy then ?'

For a few moments Amy did not speak ; a grave expression came over her face ; and, allowing her breakfast to remain untouched, she sat apparently deep in thought. At last she said, 'Mamma, people must be very unhappy when they are envious.'

'Yes, indeed they must,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'for they are always longing for things which God has not chosen to give them, and are unthankful for those which they possess ; besides, they often dislike the persons whom they fancy more blessed than themselves.'

'And should you love me, mamma, if I were envious ?' continued Amy, looking intently at her mother as she spoke.

'It would be a dreadful thing indeed, my love, which would prevent me from loving you ; but I should be very, very sorry to see you so.'

Again Amy was silent, and began eating her breakfast hastily ; but it seemed an effort, and Mrs Herbert presently saw that the tears were fast rolling down her cheeks.

'Amy, my dear child, what is the matter ?' she exclaimed.

Amy tried to answer, but her voice failed her ; and rising from her seat she hid her face on her mother's neck, and then said, in a low tone, 'Mamma, I know I have been envious.'

'If you have, my dear, you are, I am sure, very sorry for it now ; and you must not vex yourself too much when you discover you have a fault, since you know that if you pray to God He will forgive you, and help you to overcome it.'

'But, mamma,' said Amy, 'I did not think it was envy till just now. It was the other evening when we came back from Emmerton, and I was fancying how beautiful the house would be when it was all furnished, and how I should like to live there ; and then, when we got near home, I did not like the cottage as

much as I used to do, it appeared so small ; and I began to think I should be happier if I were one of my cousins, and had a carriage, and horses, and servants. But, O mamma ! it was very wicked'—and here Amy's tears again fell fast—'for I forgot that I had you.'

'The feeling was very natural,' said Mrs Herbert, 'though I will not say it was right. I have often been afraid lest seeing your nearest relations so much richer than yourself might make you uncomfortable ; but you know I told you before, that God sends to each of us some particular trial or temptation, to prove whether we will love and serve Him, or give way to our own evil inclinations ; and this will probably be yours through the greater part of your life. But when the feeling of envy arises in your heart, will you, my darling Amy, pray to God to help you, and teach you to remember that at your baptism you received the promise of infinitely greater happiness and glory than any which this world can give ? And now you must finish your breakfast, or you will make yourself quite ill and unfit for the day's pleasure ; and, after our reading and your morning lessons, we will have a very early dinner, so that we may have time to call at Colworth parsonage before we go to Emmerton. Mrs Saville has sent me word, that the story the poor girl told us the other evening is quite true, and I should like to inquire how her mother is.'

Amy reseated herself at the breakfast-table ; but she could not easily recover her spirits, and during the whole morning there was a grave tone in her voice, and a slight melancholy in her countenance, which only disappeared when Mr Walton's carriage came to the door at two o'clock, and she found herself actually on the road to Emmerton to receive her cousins. The increased distance by Colworth was about two miles, and, at another time, it would have added to her enjoyment to go by a new road ; but every moment's unnecessary delay now made her feel impatient, and she was only quieted by her mamma's reminding her that her uncle could not possibly arrive before half-past four or five o'clock, and therefore it would be a pleasant way of spending the intervening time. 'Besides,' said Mrs Herbert, 'we must not forget others, Amy, because we are happy ourselves ; perhaps we may be of use to the poor woman.' Amy sighed, and wished she could be like her mother, and never forget what was right ; and the consciousness of one fault brought back the remembrance of another, and with it the morning's conversation ; and this

again reminded her of their last evening at Emmerton, and her mamma's story, till her mind became so occupied that she forgot the novelty of the road, and her impatience to be at the end of her journey ; and when the carriage stopped at the gate at Colworth, she was thinking of what Mrs Herbert had said about her uncle Harrington, and the poor woman having the same prospect for the future, and wondering whether they either of them thought of it as her mamma seemed to do.

Mrs Saville was almost a stranger to Amy ; but her kind manner quickly made her feel at ease, and she became much interested in the account that was given of the poor woman's sufferings, and the dutiful affection shown by her eldest girl.

'Is it the one, mamma, whom we saw at Emmerton?' whispered Amy.

'Yes,' replied Mrs Saville, who had overheard the question ; 'she came home that evening almost happy, notwithstanding her mother's poverty and illness ; for it had been the first time she had ever been obliged to beg, and she had begun to despair of getting anything, when your mamma was so good to her. I learned the whole story when she brought me the note, and scolded her a little for not coming to me at once ; but we had done something for her before, and she did not like to ask again. I cannot think,' she continued, turning to Mrs Herbert, 'what the children will do ; for the mother is rapidly sinking in a decline ; and she tells me they have no near relation, excepting a grandmother, who is old and in want.'

'How far off is their parish?' asked Mrs Herbert.

'About ten miles ; it is impossible to think of their being moved now ; for the poor woman can scarcely live more than a few days longer ; yet the eldest girl seems to have no notion of her danger, and I dread the consequences of telling her, she is so fond of her mother.'

'I should like to go to the cottage, if it is near,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'or, at least, I should be glad to see the girl ; for I suppose her mother had better not be disturbed.'

'It will be very easy, if you desire it,' replied Mrs Saville ; 'for the children are kept in a separate room. I should wish you to see the woman herself, if she were equal to the sight of a stranger, for I am sure you would be pleased with her contentment and resignation.'

'May I go too?' asked Amy, when Mrs Saville left the room.

Mrs Herbert thought for a moment, and then replied, 'You may, my dear, if you are willing to assist in helping these poor people; I mean by working for them, or doing anything else which may be in your power; but it never does any one good to go and see people who are suffering, merely from curiosity.'

'I think, mamma,' said Amy, 'I should be very willing to do something for them, if you would tell me what it should be.'

'We must see them before we are able to decide,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'but we shall soon know, for here is Mrs Saville ready for her walk.'

The cottage was but a short distance from the parsonage, and on the road to Emmerton, and the carriage was ordered to meet them there, that Mrs Herbert might be spared any unnecessary fatigue. Cottage it could not well be called, for it was little more than a hovel, divided into two parts; but it was the only one vacant in the neighbourhood, and the poor woman had gladly availed herself of any shelter when she became so ill; and though Mrs Saville's kindness had made it assume a more comfortable appearance than it had done at first, it was still very destitute of furniture, and, to Amy's eyes, looked the picture of wretchedness. The eldest girl was attending to her mother, and the five younger ones playing before the door. At the appearance of the strangers, they all rushed into the house; but Mrs Saville was an old friend, and, at her order, Amy's former acquaintance, Susan Reynolds, was called in. At first, Amy thought she should scarcely have known her again,—she was looking so much neater than when she had seen her that evening at Emmerton; but she soon remembered her face, and the frightened manner which she still retained.

Mrs Herbert made many inquiries as to the state of the family,—who were their relations, what they intended to do, and whether any of them had ever been to school; and the girl showed by her answers that she had no idea of her mother's danger. When she got well, she said, they should all go home, and live with grandmother, and go to school. She had learned to read and write herself; but the little ones never had, only sometimes she had tried to teach them; but now her whole time was taken up in nursing, and it was all she could do to keep them out of mischief, and mend their clothes.

Amy looked with a wondering eye upon the poor girl, as she gave this account of herself, and thought how impossible it would be for her to do as much; and yet there seemed to be

but a slight difference in their ages, and the advantages of health and strength were all on her side. Mrs Herbert also remarked Susan's sickly countenance, and asked some questions as to her general health, but she could get very little information. Susan's care was entirely given to others, and she thought but little of her own feelings. At times, she said, she was very tired, and she did not sleep well at night ; but then the baby often cried, and she was anxious about her mother, and so it was very natural. Again Amy felt surprised as she remembered her comfortable bed, and her quiet sleep, and her mamma's watchfulness on the slightest appearance of illness.

'Does it not make you very unhappy,' she asked, 'to see your mother suffer so much?'

'Yes, Miss,' replied the girl ; 'but then I think of the time when she will get well.'

'But supposing she should never get well?' continued Amy.

Poor Susan started, as if the idea had never entered her head before ; her eyes filled with tears ; and, after a great struggle, she said, in a broken voice : 'Mother hopes to go to heaven.' As she spoke, Mrs Herbert looked at her child, and Amy knew what the look meant ; for it reminded her of the conversation at Emmerton, and she understood how true her mamma's words on that evening had been ; for her uncle Harrington, with all his riches, could not expect a greater comfort than this for his death-bed. Conscious, however, that she had been the cause of a great deal of pain, her chief desire now was to make some amends ; and, as they were about to go away, she whispered to her mamma, 'I should like so much to do something for her.'

'I will ask what would be most useful,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'This young lady,' she added, turning to Susan, 'wishes to make something which may be of service to you. Should you like it to be a frock for yourself, or for one of the children?'

'For Bessy, ma'am, if you please,' said Susan ; 'her frock is all in rags, and it was quite old when she first had it.' Bessy, who had run into the road to avoid the strangers, was summoned, and her measure properly taken ; and Mrs Herbert, slipping a shilling into Susan's hand, and telling her she should have the frock in a few days, left the cottage, followed by Mrs Saville and Amy. Mrs Saville promised to send word if any plan were proposed which could be a comfort to the poor woman, or an assistance to her children ; and then, wishing her good morning,

Mrs Herbert and Amy stepped into the carriage, and were once more on the way to Emmerton.

‘My dear child,’ said Mrs Herbert, finding that Amy made no observation on what had passed, ‘are you sorry that you went with me?’

‘Oh no! mamma,’ exclaimed Amy; ‘but I am sorry that I said anything to Susan about her mother not getting well. I am afraid I made her very miserable.’

‘It was thoughtless, my dear,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘not but what it is quite necessary that Susan should be prepared, but then it would have been better for Mrs Saville to have broken it to her gently. These things happen to us all, from our not remembering, when we talk to people, to put ourselves in their situation. You would not have said it, if you had called to mind what your own feelings would have been in a similar case.’

‘But, mamma, it is impossible to be always on the watch.’

‘It is very difficult, but not impossible,’ said Mrs Herbert; ‘habit will do wonders; and the earlier we begin thinking about other persons’ feelings, the more easy it will be to us to do so always; and I wish you particularly to be careful now, my love, because you will probably be thrown much more amongst strangers than you have been; and half the quarrels and uncomfortable feelings that we witness in society, arise from some little awkwardness or thoughtlessness in speech without any offence being intended. Though you are so young, Amy, you may soon learn, by a little observation, what things are likely to pain people, and what are not.’

‘But,’ said Amy, ‘I thought it was always necessary to speak the truth.’

‘Yes,’ replied her mother, ‘it certainly is quite necessary whenever you are called upon to do it; for instance, if you had been asked whether you thought it likely that Mrs Reynolds would get well, it would have been quite right in you to say, no, because you had heard so from Mrs Saville; but there was no occasion for you to make the observation of your own accord.’

‘I think I know what you mean, mamma,’ said Amy; ‘but will you tell me one thing more? Why did you say it would do me no good to see the poor woman, if I did not mean to help her? I am sure, whether I could have done anything or not, I should have been very sorry for her.’

‘I should like to give a long answer to your question, my dear,’ answered Mrs Herbert; ‘but here we are at the lodge

gate, and there is Stephen ready to welcome us, so we must leave it till another time.'

'How quickly we have come!' exclaimed Amy. 'Do, mamma, let me get out, and walk up to the house with Stephen; I want to hear what he says, and whether he is as impatient as I am.'

But it was only the quick glance of the eye that betrayed Stephen's impatience, as he turned to look up the road by which Mr Harrington's carriage was expected to arrive. He seemed even little inclined for conversation, though Amy did her best to draw him out, as she one moment walked quietly by his side, then ran joyously before him, and then suddenly stopped to ask him some questions about the preparations that had been made. His dress, too, was different from what it usually had been, excepting when he appeared at church on a Sunday; and Amy saw the black crape round his hat, which told that he, like her mamma, could not feel unmixed pleasure in the return of his master's family to their former home.

CHAPTER IV.

AS they entered the house, Amy's quick eye soon discovered the changes that had taken place since she was last there. A detachment of servants and a large quantity of furniture had arrived three days before; and Mrs Bridget was now in all her glory, putting the finishing stroke to everything, moving tables and chairs to suit her own taste, carefully effacing every symptom of dust, and ordering servants in all directions, partly because she thought they might as well be actively employed, and partly because she felt it was so grand to command tall men in livery. Her smart silk gown seemed to Amy's ears to rustle more audibly than ever as she met her in the hall, and there was a greater profusion of frills and ribbons about her wide-spreading cap, and, above all, a mixture of importance and bustle in her step, which, with the shrill voice and up-turned nose and chin, showed that she felt herself, for the time being, the superior of every one about her. Nevertheless, she received Amy most graciously, told her that she had persuaded Mrs Herbert to rest in the great drawing-room, and endeavoured to

induce her to do the same ; but this was quite contrary to Amy's inclinations, and the moment she could escape from Mrs Bridget's fine words, she ran off to see that her mamma was comfortable, and the next minute her light step was heard as she danced along the galleries exploring every room, new and old, to see what alterations were made in them. This was not quite according to Bridget's notions of propriety, and she muttered to herself that it would not do by and by,—Miss Amy would soon find out that the house was not hers ; but her partiality got the better of her dignity, and Amy continued the search, till, having satisfied her curiosity, she stationed herself half way between the lodge and the house to watch for the carriage. Every moment seemed now an age ; but she was not long kept in suspense ; after about ten minutes, the rumbling of wheels was distinctly heard, and almost immediately afterwards the gates were thrown open, and a carriage and four drove rapidly down the avenue. Amy's heart beat quickly ; she stood for a few moments looking at it, and then, half frightened as it came nearer and nearer, she ran at full speed towards the house that she might be the first to give the joyful intelligence to her mother. But Mrs Herbert's anxious ear had already caught the sound, and she was standing on the steps when her child flew to her almost breathless. Even in that moment of excitement, Amy could not help noticing the deadly paleness of her mother's face ; but there was now no time for words, the carriage stopped at the door, and Mrs Herbert making a great effort to command her feelings, with a firm voice welcomed her brother and his family to Emmerton. Amy shrank behind her mamma, with but one wish, to avoid being observed by the tall grave-looking gentleman, whom she thought she never could call uncle ; and Mrs Herbert, considering only her brother's painful feelings, suffered him to pass with but very few words. Mrs Harrington followed, and Amy scarcely remarked what her aunt was like, her whole mind being occupied with wondering whether the two fashionable-looking young ladies, who remained in the carriage searching for their baskets and books, could possibly be her own cousins.

‘Which is Dora, mamma?’ she whispered.

But Mrs Herbert moved forward, as her nieces ran up the steps, saying, ‘Your mamma has left me to introduce myself, my dear girls. I can hardly imagine you have any remembrance of your aunt Herbert and your cousin Amy. I suppose I shall

not be mistaken in calling you Dora,' she added, as she kissed the one who, from her height and general appearance, was evidently the eldest.

Amy's first curiosity was thus set at rest, but in its stead she was seized with an overpowering feeling of shyness. Dora looked almost as awful a person as her papa, whom she very much resembled. There was the same high forehead, dark eye, rather large nose, and haughty curl of the lip; and her height, which was unusual at her age, gave the idea of her being at least two years older than she really was; and Amy turned to Margaret in despair of finding anything like a companion; but Margaret had a much younger face, and slighter figure, though she also was tall; and if her dress and manner had been less like those of a grown-up person, Amy might, perhaps, have felt more comfortable.

'You are quite right, aunt,' said Dora, in a sharp, loud voice, which sounded disagreeably in Amy's ears, after the gentle tones to which she had listened from her infancy; 'I am Dora, and this is Margaret, and there is little Rose behind.'

'I begin to think,' said Mrs Herbert, 'that, after all, Rose will be Amy's best playfellow; we were neither of us quite prepared for anything so tall and womanly, and Amy is such a tiny child, you will think her more fit for the nursery than the school-room, I suspect.'

'Is this Amy?' said Dora, giving her first a patronising tap on the shoulder, and then a hasty kiss; 'I dare say we shall be very good friends.' And without another word she ran into the house.

'I am sure we shall,' said Margaret, in a more affectionate tone, and Amy, who had been chilled by Dora's manner, returned her embrace most cordially.

'I must give little Rose a kiss before we go into the drawing-room,' said Mrs Herbert, 'and perhaps, Margaret, you will introduce me to Miss Morton.'

Margaret stared, as if she did not quite understand her aunt's meaning. 'Oh!' she said, 'there is no occasion for that, we never do it with her; but, to be sure,' she continued, seeing that Mrs Herbert looked grave, 'if you like it. Simmons, help Miss Morton down.'

The footman moved forward a few steps, lifted little Rose from the carriage, and then held out his hand to Miss Morton, who was seated by the side of the lady's maid.

'Which is Miss Morton?' asked Mrs Herbert, in a low voice,

much puzzled between two silk gowns, two silk bonnets, and two lace veils.

‘Well, that is amusing!’ exclaimed Margaret, pertly, and bursting into a short, conceited laugh. ‘Certainly Morris is the nicest-looking of the two. Morris, my aunt did not know you and Emily Morton apart.’

Amy felt very uncomfortable at this speech, though she scarcely knew why; and even Margaret, when the words were uttered, seemed conscious they were wrong; for, with a heightened colour, and without waiting to introduce Mrs Herbert, she seized Amy’s hand, and turned quickly away.

‘Miss Morton will, I am sure, willingly pardon a mistake which only distance could have caused,’ said Mrs Herbert, as she looked with interest at the delicate features and sweet expression of the peculiarly lady-like young girl, whose face had become like crimson on hearing Margaret’s thoughtless speech. ‘I ought to know you; for I well remember seeing you some years ago, when I was staying with my brother at Wayland Court; but you were then such a child, that I confess I find a considerable alteration.’

The answer to this was given in a low, hurried tone, for Emily Morton had lately been so little accustomed to civility, that it confused her almost as much as neglect. She seemed only anxious to divert Mrs Herbert’s attention from herself to little Rose as soon as possible; and whispering to the child to go with her aunt into the drawing-room, she herself followed the lady’s-maid in a different direction. Amy was by this time rather more at her ease; and when Mrs Herbert entered, she was standing by her uncle, and had found courage to say a few words. Mrs Harrington was leaning back on the sofa, taking but slight notice of anything; and Dora and Margaret were examining the furniture, and making remarks which were far from pleasing to Amy’s ears. The room was so dark, and the windows were so deep, and the furniture was so very old-fashioned, they were quite sure they never could be happy in such a strange place; and after the first observations about the journey were over, Amy began to feel still more uncomfortable; for she fancied that her mamma wished her to be away, that she might talk to her uncle and aunt, and yet her cousins showed no intention of leaving the room. At last, surprised at her own boldness, she whispered to Dora, who was standing next her, ‘Should you not like to see the house up-stairs?’

Dora turned sharply round, and Amy could not quite understand the tone of her voice, as she said, 'I suppose you wish to do the honours.'

'Amy, my love,' said Mrs Herbert, who had overheard the question and answer, 'you must recollect that your cousins are at home; they will go up-stairs when they please.'

Poor Amy felt puzzled and vexed; she had meant no harm, and yet both her mamma and Dora seemed annoyed. She did not, however, venture to say anything further, and was quite relieved when Mr Harrington remarked that it was a good notion, the girls had better go and choose their rooms at once, and settle themselves a little; and by that time they would be ready, perhaps, for their tea, as they had all dined on the road quite early.

Amy hung back, afraid of again doing something which her cousin might not like; but Margaret called to her to follow them, and in a few moments she had forgotten her discomfort in the pleasure of showing the different apartments, and pointing out all their several advantages. But Dora and Margaret were very difficult to please: one room was too small, another too large; one looked out at the back, and another at the side; one was too near the drawing-room, and another too far off. Still Amy did not care; for she had determined in her own mind that they would decide upon the bedroom oriel, which was just over the old schoolroom.

'Well! this really does seem as if it would do,' said Margaret, as they entered. 'Do look, Dora; it is the prettiest room in the whole house, and has the prettiest view, too; and the dressing-room is so large and nice.'

'I care very little which room I have,' said Dora, who was looking grave and unhappy. 'The house is so sad and melancholy, it is all much the same; we shall never be happy here.'

'Not happy!' said Amy. 'Oh yes! by and by you will; it never seems gloomy to me.'

'That is because you have always been accustomed to it,' replied Dora. 'If you had seen Wayland Court, you would think nothing of this.'

'Dora is determined not to be happy,' said Margaret; and then she added, in a whisper to Amy, 'She was so very fond of poor Edward.'

Dora evidently heard the words; for the tears rushed to her

eyes, and she bit her lip and began walking about examining the pictures ; but the painting which hung over the mantel-piece quite overcame all attempt at composure. It was the picture of Mr Harrington's grandfather, taken when a boy. He was represented riding in the park, on a spirited pony ; and both Dora and Margaret saw in a moment the likeness to their brother. It was not natural for Dora to give way to any display of feeling ; but she had suffered very much during her brother's illness,—and this, with her regret at leaving Wayland, the fatigue of the journey, and what she considered to be the gloom of the house, entirely overpowered her ; and Amy, who had never been accustomed to the sight of any grief, except her mamma's quiet tears, became frightened. Margaret, too, looked astonished, but neither said nor did anything to assist or comfort her sister ; and Amy, having exhausted all the kind expressions she could think of, at last remembered Mrs Herbert's infallible remedy of a glass of water, which soon enabled Dora, in some degree, to recover herself. At first she took but little notice of Amy, who stood by her side, begging her to try and be happy ; in fact, like many other proud persons, she felt annoyed that she had given way so much before a mere child, as she considered her cousin to be ; but there was no withstanding the winning tones of Amy's voice, and the perfect sincerity of her manner ; and when, at last, she became silent, and looked almost as unhappy as herself, Dora's haughtiness was quite subdued, and she exclaimed, ' I must love you, Amy ; for no one else would care whether I were miserable or not.'

Amy was surprised at the idea of any person's seeing others suffer and not feeling for them ; but, rejoicing in the success of her efforts, she now tried to divert Dora's attention, by talking of the conveniences of the room, and the view from the window. It was, at length, quite decided that they should occupy it, and the bell was forthwith rung to summon Morris. But the summons was given in vain ; no Morris appeared. Again and again the rope was pulled, but no footsteps were heard in answer. Dora became irritated and Margaret fretful ; and, after a considerable delay, Amy proposed that, as she knew the way to the housekeeper's room, she should try and find out Morris, who was very probably there. The thought of the strange servants was certainly alarming ; but then her cousins were in distress, and she could help them ; and, overcoming her timidity, she set off on what appeared to her quite an expedition. Boldly and quickly

she threaded her way through the dark, winding passages, every turn of which had been familiar to her from her childhood. But when she stopped at the head of the back staircase, and listened to the hubbub of voices in the servants' hall, her first fears returned. Even Bridget's shrill tones were drowned in the medley of sound, and Amy looked in vain, in the hope of seeing her cross the passage. After a few moments, however, she felt inclined to laugh at her own shyness, and ran quickly down, determining to inquire for Morris of the first person she met. The servants were rushing to and fro in every direction, in all the important bustle of a first arrival, and one or two pushed by without taking any notice of her; but Amy, having resolved not to be daunted, still went on; and, as a door suddenly opened immediately at her side, and a tall female servant (as she imagined), dressed in deep mourning, entered the passage, she turned eagerly to her, pulled her gown, and begged to know where Morris was to be found. To her extreme consternation, her aunt's voice answered quickly and angrily—

'Who is this? Amy here! how very improper, amongst all the servants! Why did you not ring the bell, child? Go away, this moment.'

Amy's first impulse was to obey as fast as possible; but she knew she was doing no harm; and a few words, which her fright, however, made it difficult to utter, soon explained to Mrs Harrington the cause of her appearance there. Morris was instantly summoned, and Amy returned to her cousins to recount her adventure.

'You don't mean to say mamma saw you amongst all the servants?' exclaimed Margaret. 'Well! I would not have been you for something; it is just the very thing she most objects to. I have heard her lecture by the hour about it; we have never been allowed to go within a mile of the kitchen; and even little Rose, though she is such a baby, is kept just as strict.'

'Well, but,' said Amy, 'why did you let me go, if you knew my aunt would object?'

'Oh!' said Margaret, 'you offered, and I thought mamma was safe in the drawing-room.'

'And we wanted Morris,' interrupted Dora, 'I hate false excuses.'

Amy felt rather angry, and thought she should not have done the same by them; but everything this evening was so very new and strange, that she kept all her feelings to herself for the

present, to be talked over with her mamma when they got home.

‘But were you not very much frightened?’ continued Margaret. ‘What did you say when mamma spoke to you?’

‘I was frightened just at first,’ replied Amy; ‘but then I knew I was not doing anything wrong, and so I did not really care.’

‘Well, if you are not the boldest little thing I ever met with,’ said Margaret; ‘even Dora would have cared, if she had been you.’

‘It is no use to say any more,’ exclaimed Dora, in rather an irritated voice, for she prided herself upon caring for nobody; ‘we must leave off talking now, and proceed to work. I am resolved to have all my things unpacked, and settled to-night; so I shall choose my drawers and closets, and say where I will have them put, and then Morris may as well begin.’

‘But it is so late, Miss,’ said poor Morris, who was quite exhausted with the packing of the previous night, and the fatigue of the long day’s journey; ‘and yours and Miss Margaret’s things are mixed, many of them.’

Dora coloured, and said angrily, ‘You forget yourself, Morris; I have told you that I choose to have my boxes unpacked to-night.’

Amy longed to petition for a little mercy; but she was beginning to learn not to interfere where she had no power, and Dora immediately walked round the room to examine drawers and closets, and to give directions, while Morris stood by, the picture of despairing fatigue. Margaret was too indolent to give herself much trouble about the matter, and Amy was rather astonished to see that Dora did not consult her in the least. She chose the best of everything for herself; and when Morris inquired what Miss Margaret wished to have done, the only answer she could get was, that it did not signify; at any rate, to-morrow would be quite soon enough to settle, for she was far too tired to think about it now; and Morris, thankful for even a partial respite, asked for no more orders, but hastened away to make the proper selection of trunks and imperials. Dora and Margaret then arranged their dress and went down-stairs to tea, followed by Amy, who felt alarmed as she thought of encountering her aunt’s eye after her misdemeanour. Mrs Harrington, however, took but little notice of her; she had in some degree recovered her energy, and was able to exert herself at the tea-table: and

as whatever she did always occupied her whole attention, she seemed to be quite engrossed in cups and saucers, milk and cream; and Amy placed herself at the farthest distance from her, taking care to have the urn between them, and reserving a place at her side for her mamma, who was standing at the window, talking in a low voice to Mr Harrington. But when the labour of tea-making was over, Mrs Harrington was able to think of other things, and her first inquiry was, what the girls thought of their rooms, and why they had been obliged to send Amy into the servants' hall.

'I suppose there is no bell, mamma,' said Dora; 'for we rang a great many times, but no one came.'

'Where was Miss Morton?' said Mrs Harrington; 'she ought to have been with you; it would not signify her going amongst the servants, but it was highly improper for your cousin.'

'Emily Morton always thinks she has enough to do to take care of herself,' said Margaret; 'she is not over-fond of helping any one.'

This struck Amy as very unjust; for Miss Morton had not been told where they were, and, of course, was not to blame. She was not aware that it was usual with Mrs Harrington to put upon Miss Morton everything that went wrong; and that she was expected to be at hand to assist Dora and Margaret on all occasions, no one considering for an instant whether the expectation were reasonable or unreasonable.

'But, mamma,' said Dora, 'I must tell you that Emily did not know we were gone to our rooms, so we ought not to find fault with her.'

'But I do find fault with her, Dora,' replied Mrs Harrington; 'she knows very well what is expected of her, and she ought to have inquired whether she could be of any use to you.'

'But, mamma,'—persisted Dora.

'I will not hear any buts, Dora; I must be the best judge of what Miss Morton's duties are; you are not generally so apt to take her part.'

'Only I hate injustice,' muttered Dora, in a sulky tone.

'And I can't bear Emily Morton,' whispered Margaret, who was sitting next Amy.

'Can't bear her!' exclaimed Amy.

'Hush! hush!' said Margaret; 'I don't want every one to hear.'

Amy would have repeated her exclamation in a lower voice,

but Mrs Herbert now approached the tea-table, and began asking questions of her nieces, and trying as much as possible to make herself at home with them. Dora's answers were rather pert, and Margaret's rather affected; but neither Mr nor Mrs Harrington checked them in the least, and Amy felt annoyed at hearing them speak to her mamma almost as familiarly as if she had been of their own age. She herself sat perfectly silent, too much in awe of her aunt's grave looks to venture an observation, and quite amused with watching what passed, and remarking to herself upon the magnificence of the silver tea-urn and its appendages, and the profusion of things with which the table was covered, so different from what she was accustomed to see at the cottage. She was not sorry, however, when her mamma proposed ordering the carriage; for the novelty of everything did not quite make up for the restraint she was under. She was afraid not only of her uncle and aunt, but even of the footmen when they came near, and she anxiously observed Dora and Margaret, thinking she could not do wrong in imitating them.'

'We shall see you to-morrow at the cottage, I hope,' said Mrs Herbert to her brother, when the carriage was announced.

Mrs Harrington answered for him in a short, ungracious manner—'I don't know, indeed, there will be so much to arrange; perhaps the girls may manage it; but Mr Harrington's time and mine will be completely occupied.'

'I shall come and see you as soon as possible, you may be quite sure,' said Mr Harrington; 'it is too great a pleasure to talk over everything with you, for me not to seize all opportunities of doing so; though perhaps to-morrow, as Charlotte says, I may be very busy.'

'Then we will expect the girls alone,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'Amy is longing to do the honours of the cottage; and, if they come about one o'clock, they can have their luncheon with us.'

Amy added her entreaties, and Margaret, with a great many kisses, declared it would be the thing of all others she should most enjoy: while Dora simply said, 'Good night,' and expressed no pleasure about the matter. When Amy found herself alone with her mamma, her first wish was to talk over all that had passed, but Mrs Herbert was looking very pale and exhausted, and her child had lately learned to watch every change in her countenance, and to understand in a moment when it was

necessary for her to be silent; she therefore said but little during their drive home; and it was not till Mrs Herbert was seated in the arm-chair in her own room, that Amy ventured to express her feelings. 'I may talk to you now, mamma,' she said, 'for there is no rumbling of the carriage to worry you; but you did look so ill when we left Emmerton, that I did not like to do it.'

'Yes, my dear,' said Mrs Herbert, 'it has been a very trying day; but you shall ease your mind before you go to sleep, and tell me how you like your cousins, and everything you have been doing, and saying, and feeling.'

'The doing and saying will be easy enough,' replied Amy; 'but, dear mamma, it was all so strange, I cannot tell at all what I have been feeling; and then I cannot make up my mind about anything, and that puzzles me. I always fancied I should be able to tell at once what I liked and disliked; but all the way home I have been trying to find out which of my cousins is the nicest; and one moment I think one thing, and the next another. And then the house was so changed with the different furniture, that it seemed quite like another place; only not quite another either, more like what the cottage seems to me in my dreams; and then I am so afraid of my aunt, and I think I made her angry—but I must tell you about that presently. I was so frightened at the men-servants too, there were such a number; and that one with the black hair, who was not in livery, is so like Mr Saville of Colworth, that I thought at first he was going to speak to me.'

Mrs Herbert smiled. 'You have certainly contrived to get a curious medley in your head, Amy; but you will never be able to talk over all these things to-night, it is getting so late.'

'No, mamma,' said Amy, 'I feel as if there would be something to say if I were to go on till to-morrow; but I should care for nothing else if I could only make out which of my cousins I like best.'

'But,' said Mrs Herbert, 'it is hardly possible to settle such a weighty matter, on so short an acquaintance; probably if you decided it to-night, you would change again to-morrow. I dare say it will take some time before you can know them sufficiently well, really to make up your mind.'

'Well,' sighed Amy, 'I suppose I must leave it. I think, though, I like Margaret, because she is affectionate; and Dora, because she seems to speak just what she means; but I liked

Margaret much better when we were alone, than when she was talking to you, mamma; her voice and all seemed quite different.'

'And what did you think of Rose?' asked Mrs Herbert.

'Oh! I only saw her for a moment; she looked as if she must be a darling little thing, she is so very pretty; but, mamma, I cannot understand about Miss Morton. Is she a lady?'

'Yes, my dear, certainly; she is the daughter of a clergyman.'

'But, then, where was she all the evening? She did not come in at tea-time.'

'I believe she generally spends the evenings alone,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'as I told you the other day.'

'It seems so strange,' said Amy; 'and Margaret told me she could not bear her, so I suppose she must be very disagreeable.'

'You must not judge of people merely from what you hear, but from what you see of them too,' said Mrs Herbert; 'so don't determine upon poor Miss Morton's being disagreeable till you are more acquainted with her; she seemed to me to be very gentle and ladylike.'

'I feel as if I never should be able to decide about any one now,' sighed Amy, 'I am so very puzzled; and I am not quite sure whether I have been happy to-night.'

'My dear child,' said Mrs Herbert, 'I must send you to bed, for I am sure if you sit up thinking and talking any more you will be unfit for everything to-morrow. I only wish you to tell me what you could have done to make your aunt angry with you.'

Amy repeated the history of her adventure, but Mrs Herbert made no observation upon it; and she was then sent to her room to prepare for bed.

'You will come back to me when you are ready to read,' said Mrs Herbert. And in about half an hour's time Amy reappeared with her Bible.

'It seems so nice and quiet,' she said, 'to be able to sit down with you quite alone, mamma, after seeing so many people; and I think I shall go to sleep better when I have read my psalm as usual.'

'I hope you will always find it a blessing to read your Bible, my dear; and I know myself that it is peculiarly so when we have been much excited; there is something so calm and soothing in it.'

Amy read her psalm, and did not attempt to say anything more about Emmerton, for she had always been taught that her last thoughts, before she slept, should be of God and heaven rather than of the things of earth ; only, as Mrs Herbert bent over her, to give her the last kiss, she said, ‘ Mamma, may I tell you one thing which came into my head to-night ? You know I have read in the Bible, and have heard people talk about the world, and that there are temptations in it, and that we ought to avoid it ; and I never could quite understand this, because it seemed that I had no world, for you always do what is right, and there is no evil in the trees and flowers ; and one day you said that the world was different to everybody, and that it meant the things which tempted us to do wrong ; and to-night, when I was saying my prayers, I recollected that I had felt angry with my cousins, and that you had said, “that perhaps being with them would make me envious ;” and then it came into my head, that perhaps Emmerton will be my world—do you think it will ?’

‘ Most probably it may be,’ said Mrs Herbert.

‘ But then, mamma, will it be right to go there ?’

‘ It is not right to shut ourselves up from our relations, and so lose opportunities of learning good from them, or setting them a good example,’ replied her mother. ‘ If your cousins are better than yourself, they will, I hope, be of great use to you ; and if they are not, you may try and benefit them. Your being envious and angry is your fault, not theirs ; and if you were never to see them again, you would still have the same bad feelings in your mind. Renouncing the world does not mean shutting ourselves up and never seeing any one, but it does mean trying to avoid unnecessary occasions of temptation, as well as to overcome sin ; and you will avoid the world, not by keeping away from your cousins, but by striving against evil feelings and actions when you are with them, and not allowing yourself to envy them because they are richer, and live in a larger house.’

‘ I should like to talk a great deal more, mamma,’ said Amy, ‘ only I am so sleepy.’

‘ We must have some more conversation to-morrow,’ said Mrs Herbert, as she left the room. And in two minutes Amy had forgotten all her difficulties and all her pleasures, in the deep, calm repose which few but children can enjoy.

CHAPTER V.

THE first impression on Amy's mind, after her introduction to her cousins, on their arrival at Emmerton, was that of disappointment. The long-looked-for event had come and passed, but it had not brought with it the pleasure that had been anticipated. Her cousins were not at all what she had expected to see ; and she felt as if they were more like strangers now than when she had only pictured them to herself such as she desired. And yet it was so strange to her to be unhappy or discontented, that she did not long dwell upon the things which had annoyed her in them, but turned with pleasure to the hope that it was her own fault they did not seem more kind and agreeable, and that when she knew them better she should find them all she could wish. There was great enjoyment, too, in talking over everything with her mamma at breakfast, which she could easily do now that the fatigue and excitement were gone ; and so fully did Emmerton engross her thoughts that she entirely forgot Susan Reynolds, and the promised frock, till Mrs Herbert produced it, ready prepared, after the lessons were finished, and begged her to do as much as she could before her cousins' arrival.

'It will not be much, I am afraid, mamma,' said Amy, 'for it is getting late, and they agreed to be here by one ; but I must do more this evening.'

'Yes,' said Mrs Herbert, 'I should be sorry if the poor child were disappointed.'

'So should I too, mamma. Now I have seen her, I really do feel it will be a pleasure to help her. And will you tell me, whilst I am working, what you had not time to speak about yesterday ? I mean, why it never does people any good to go and see others suffer merely from curiosity.'

'It not only does them no good, but it does them harm,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'and for this reason : God gives to almost every one, and especially to young people, many kind, amiable feelings, as a sort of treasure which they are carefully to keep. Now, these kind feelings, as people grow older, gradually die away as they get accustomed to the sight of suffering, and so at last they are likely to become cold and hard-hearted ; and there is only one sure way of preventing this,—by doing kind actions whenever we are blessed with kind feelings. Perhaps you would rather I should explain myself more clearly,' added Mrs Herbert, as Amy

laid down her work, and looked thoughtfully in her mother's face. When you saw Susan Reynolds yesterday you had compassion for her, and a great wish to help her : this was the good feeling given you by God. But supposing you had thought that, after all, it was too much trouble to work for her, you would soon have forgotten her, and the next time you saw her you would probably have pitied her less, and the next time less still ; and if you had gone on so, you might have ended in becoming perfectly cold and selfish. But by determining to do something, you have kept up your interest ; and you will find that your kind feeling will continue and increase, not only for her, but for other persons you may see in distress.'

'But, then, I have heard you say, mamma, that we ought not to follow our feelings entirely.'

'No,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'because very often our feelings are wrong, and therefore we must have some other rule to go by, or we shall continually mistake our duties ; but when they are right they are given us by God to make those duties easy and pleasant ; and if we do not encourage them, we shall find when we grow old that it will be very difficult, if not almost impossible, to do right, however we may wish it.'

'Then, mamma, if we had always good feelings there would be no occasion to do anything but just what we felt inclined ; how very nice that would be !'

'There is but one way of getting these good feelings,' said Mrs Herbert, 'and that is by doing what we know we ought, whether we like it or not ; and only one way of keeping them when we have got them, by taking care always to act upon them ; and if we begin when we are young, it is astonishing how easy it will soon become. I know you like an illustration, Amy, to make you remember things ; so now I will give you one, to teach you the difference between feelings and duty. Feelings are like the horses which carry us quickly and easily along the road, only sometimes they stumble, and sometimes they go wrong, and now and then they will not move at all ; but duty is like the coachman who guides them, and spurs them up when they are too slow, and brings them back when they go out of the way.'

'Thank you, mamma,' said Amy, as she ran to the window at the sound of approaching wheels ; 'I think I shall always remember now. And here come my uncle's feelings down the lane, —beautiful gray ones ; and there is duty on the coach-box driving them.'

‘Well,’ observed Mrs Herbert, smiling, ‘I hope duty will guide the feelings properly round the corner, for it is a very awkward turn.’

Amy looked anxiously into the carriage as it drove up, and with great delight saw that it contained only her two cousins, for her aunt’s stern look was sufficiently impressed upon her recollection to make the idea of meeting her again disagreeable. ‘I am so glad you are come!’ she exclaimed to Margaret, who was the first to alight; ‘I have finished all my lessons, and dinner will very soon be ready, and afterwards, if you like, we can go all over the garden.’

‘I should not think that would take very long,’ said Dora, casting a contemptuous glance around.

Amy, for a moment, felt almost ashamed, as if there were something disgraceful in not having a large garden; but she did not make any reply, and led her cousins into the house, with a secret dislike of their seeing how different it was from Emmerton, and a dread lest Dora should make some more observations. In her aunt’s presence, however, Dora was rather subdued, and did not venture to remark upon anything, though Amy, who watched her carefully, noticed the inquisitive look she gave to the furniture, as if she were determined to know exactly what everything was made of; and when Mrs Herbert left them, her first question was, ‘So this is your largest room, Amy, is it?’

‘Yes,’ said Amy; ‘and we have a dining-room and study besides.’

‘And is that all?’ added Margaret.

‘All but the bedrooms,’ replied Amy.

‘Well! how odd it must be to live in such a tiny house!’ continued Margaret. ‘I should get so tired of it. To have lived all one’s life in three rooms! Fancy, Dora, how strange it must be!’

‘But,’ said Amy, ‘it does very well for mamma and me. You know many poor people have only one.’

‘That may be all right for poor people; but *you* are a lady—you are our cousin.’

‘Oh!’ said Dora, ‘it does not signify when people are accustomed to it. And now Amy will be able to come and see us at Emmerton; and she can walk about the grounds; and sometimes, I daresay, mamma will let her have a drive in the carriage, which will make a nice change.’

Amy was extremely inclined to say that she never wished to do

anything of the kind, for she remembered that only a week before she was able to walk all over Emmerton, both in the house and the park, without any person's permission being required but her mamma's.

'You will like that very much, shan't you, dear?' said Margaret, giving her a kiss.

The kiss was not returned; but Amy coloured, and only replied, that she did not want any change.

'I declare you look quite offended,' exclaimed Margaret; 'doesn't she, Dora? Well! I would not be so touchy for a great deal.'

'I don't wish to be offended, and I am sure I could not bear to be touchy,' said Amy, with tears in her eyes; 'only I am very happy with mamma.'

'Of course,' said Margaret; 'but then you need not be angry with us merely because we wish to give you a little pleasure; besides, it is so unkind. I thought you would be fond of us, instead of getting so cross in a minute.'

This was rather more than poor Amy could bear, for she had never been blamed unjustly in her life, and believed that she must be in the wrong whenever any fault was found with her. She was conscious, too, of having felt angry; and sorrow for this, added to a slight remaining irritation against her cousins, made her tears flow fast.

'How silly!' exclaimed Dora. 'We never meant to vex you; you will get us all into a scrape if you cry, for my aunt will be back in a moment.'

'No one gets into a scrape with mamma,' said Amy; 'but I am sure it would be me she would blame now; and I am so sorry I was cross.'

'Never mind anything more about it,' said Margaret; 'just look natural again, and then we shall not care.'

Amy did her best to look natural, but her mamma's quick eye soon perceived on her return that there had been something amiss; however, she asked no questions, knowing that she should hear everything when they were alone; and both Dora and Margaret were considerably relieved when they found themselves seated at the dining-table, with Amy looking as bright and happy as usual.

'You must make a good luncheon, my dears,' said Mrs Herbert; 'for I suppose you dine very late.'

'Oh no!' replied Dora, 'this will be our dinner; mamma always dislikes our being late.'

‘She says it makes us ill, and spoils our complexions,’ added Margaret, casting, at the same time, a glance at her white neck in the glass which hung opposite to her; ‘so we always dine about two with Emily Morton and Rose in the schoolroom.’

‘Is Miss Morton very strict?’ asked Amy.

‘Strict!’ answered Dora, with a toss of her head. ‘Who should she be strict with? She is not our governess.’

‘But then she teaches you some things,’ said Amy.

‘Oh yes, music and drawing; but that any one can do. I should just as soon think of attending to Morris as to her.’

‘Only,’ said Mrs Herbert, in a quiet, grave tone, ‘that she is older than you are, and is a lady by birth and education.’

Dora pouted and bit her lip, but she did not dare to make any pert reply, and only showed her displeasure by the sulky way in which she answered her aunt’s further questions. Margaret was more communicative; and Amy soon became amused with her account of Wayland, and all they had been accustomed to do: but there was no interest shown for her in return, for Margaret seemed to find every subject dull which did not immediately relate to herself. She appeared unwilling, also, to mention Miss Morton again, though Amy wished more to hear of her than of any other person or thing; and when, after the dinner was ended, Mrs Herbert suggested they should go into the garden, she determined to ask them why they disliked her.

‘Do let me know,’ she said to Margaret, as they seated themselves in the arbour, after exploring the not very spacious domain, ‘why you don’t like Miss Morton. I told mamma, last night, that you said you could not bear her.’

‘How ill-natured!’ exclaimed Margaret; ‘I declare I never will tell you anything again. Unless you promise not to repeat to aunt Herbert what we say, I can assure you we shall take special care not to talk to you.’

‘O Margaret!’ said Amy, looking very much distressed; ‘indeed I meant no harm. But I cannot make such a promise; for I always do tell mamma everything, and she is never angry.’

‘That won’t do,’ replied Margaret: ‘you *must*, or we shall not talk to you.’

‘But if there is no harm in what you say,’ asked Amy, ‘why must I not repeat it?’

‘It is no use arguing,’ replied Margaret. ‘I never could bear the notion that every word I said would be told over again; and therefore, if you will not promise, I will not talk, that is all.’

And she threw herself back, and began picking flowers to pieces. Then, after a few moments' pause, she turned to Dora, and said, 'That was a very ill-natured trick she played on papa's birthday, --was it not?'

Dora nodded assent; and Margaret looked at Amy, hoping to excite her curiosity, for she was longing above all things to find some excuse for breaking her resolution. But Amy sat immovable, only appearing thoughtful and unhappy. A second silence ensued, which was broken again by Margaret, who exclaimed, in a pettish tone, that the sun was so hot it was not to be borne; she wondered how any one could have built an arbour in such a position.

Dora, though screened by the projecting branch of a tree, immediately took up the parasol at her side; and Margaret began lamenting that she had left hers in the house.

'Can't you spare me yours, Dora?' she said; 'you never remembered you had it till I complained of the heat.'

'You always leave everything behind you,' was Dora's answer; 'and I am sure I shall be burnt as brown as a berry if I don't shade myself. You had better go in and fetch your own parasol, and that will make you recollect it another time.'

'I know who left their handkerchief behind them only this morning,' retorted Margaret; 'and I know who sent Emily Morton all over the house to look for it.'

'That was only once in a way,' said Dora. And here a long bickering dialogue was carried on between the sisters, at the commencement of which Amy disappeared; and before it had been decided which possessed most disagreeable qualities, a subject that was discussed with great warmth and earnestness, Margaret found herself sheltered from the sun by the intervention of a parasol.

'Where did you get it?' she exclaimed to Amy: 'you did not bring it with you.'

'No,' replied Amy; 'I got it from the house just now.'

'And did you really go in on purpose! Well, that was very good-natured, I must say; and now I do think, as a reward, I will tell you about Emily Morton.'

'A reward to herself, not to you, Amy,' said Dora; 'she has been dying to tell you all the time. I would have done it, only I knew it would come out if you had patience to wait.'

'But,' replied Amy, in rather a timid voice, 'I hope you understand, Margaret, that I cannot make any promise about mamma.'

‘Why don’t you hear what she has to say first,’ said Dora, ‘and then talk about the promise afterwards?’

‘I would rather settle it first,’ answered Amy, firmly; ‘I should not have any pleasure in knowing it if I thought Margaret were mistaken about me.’

‘Well! never mind now,’ said Margaret, ‘I am not going to speak treason; and you are so good-natured, Amy, I am sure you will never repeat anything to get us into a scrape.’

‘Perhaps I am not good-natured,’ persisted Amy; ‘so pray don’t tell me unless you quite like it.’

‘But I do quite like it, now; and I am sure you are good-natured, and so you shall hear. I want to tell you what Emily Morton did last year on papa’s birthday, and then I know you will hate her as much as we do. We have always had quite a *fête* given then; for papa says it was begun when he came of age, and he does not like to give it up.’

‘Oh!’ said Amy, ‘that must have been what mamma was telling me about the other day; she gave me a long account of it.’

‘And did not aunt Herbert think it very delightful?’ asked Dora. ‘Papa always speaks of it with such pleasure.’

‘Yes,’ answered Amy; ‘she says it was one of the happiest days of her life.’

‘It must be very nice,’ continued Dora, ‘to have every one looking up to one and envying one. I dare say aunt Herbert wished she had been papa.’

‘She said she wished it then,’ replied Amy; ‘but I am sure she does not now.’

‘What!—not to have two great houses, and heaps of servants, and plenty of money?’ said Margaret.

‘But,’ replied Amy, ‘mamma, when she told me the story, said that we all had the promise of much greater things given us at our baptism, and so it did not signify.’

‘What do you mean, Amy?’ asked Dora, in a tone of extreme surprise. ‘Great things promised us at our baptism! I never knew anything I had either given or promised me then, excepting my name, and my old purple Bible and Prayer-book.’

‘O Dora! exclaimed Amy, ‘pray do not talk so; I am sure it must be very wrong; for mamma says that it has been the greatest thing in all my life, and that if I do as I promised I would then, I shall be quite sure of being happy when I die: and every year, on the day of my baptism, she makes me read over the service, and talks to me about it.’

‘Then it is very strange, that is all I can say,’ replied Dora. ‘I never in my life before heard any one say that baptism was any good besides giving a child a name.’

Amy looked still more shocked. ‘Oh ! but Dora,’ she said, very gravely, ‘indeed, it must be a great good ; for you know when we were baptized, God gave us His Holy Spirit, that we might be able to do our duty.’

‘I don’t understand what you mean, Amy,’ said Dora, hastily, ‘and I don’t think you understand yourself, so we will not talk any more about it. Do, Margaret, go on about Emily Morton.’

‘I will,’ said Margaret, ‘if you will not interrupt me so. It was last year, Amy, on the day of the *fête* ; and two of my aunts, mamma’s sisters, and my uncle, Sir Henry Charlton, came to Wayland to keep it. Uncle Henry knows a great deal about drawing, and he always likes to see ours ; and he had promised us a long time before, that if we could show him six good drawings on papa’s birthday, he would give us each a beautiful picture done by one of the first artists in London. I worked very hard at first, and then I got a little tired, but I made sure I should be able to finish them in time ; only, somehow or other, I was so hurried at last, for we had some new dresses to be tried on, and there were some songs to be practised, and there were a good many people staying in the house, that I had only five finished. I was in a great fright, and my only hope was that uncle Henry would not count them ; but, in the morning, after he had looked at Dora’s, I watched him count *them*, and then I thought I had no chance ; but when I came to show mine, I found that by mistake one of Emily Morton’s had got amongst them, which made them just right, and she was not in the room, so I had no fear of anything being said ; and it was such a beauty I was sure my uncle would be pleased. Well ! he looked at them all, and said they were very good, and was admiring Emily Morton’s especially, when, to my great horror, in she came, and he immediately called out to her to look at the drawings with him. I could not imagine what to do ; and at last I thought perhaps she would be good-natured for once in her life, so I went to her directly, and whispered all about it, and asked her to let it pass, or I should lose my beautiful picture ; and really, Amy, it was worth a great deal of money ; and, do you know, she actually declared she would not do it. I know I looked miserable, and I never begged so hard for anything in my life ; and at last I was obliged to give it up, for uncle Henry began to

wonder what we were talking about, and so I ran out of the room, and then it all came out. And there was such a great fuss; uncle Henry preached me a sermon, and papa and mamma were so cross; in fact, I never got into such a scrape in my life before, and all because of Emily Morton. Now, shouldn't you hate her, Amy, if you were me?'

Amy was silent.

'Oh!' continued Margaret, 'you could not be so unkind as to take her part.'

'But,' said Amy, 'it seems as if she were right.'

'How can that be? I am sure no one can be right who is unkind.'

'No,' said Amy, looking a little perplexed; 'but then it would have been deceit.'

'Deceit! what deceit?' asked Margaret; 'she had nothing to do with it; all I wanted was for her to hold her tongue.'

'But your uncle would have thought the drawing was yours, when it was not.'

'And what harm would that have done? I will venture to say I could have finished just as good a one if I had tried; it was only a sketch. No, no, it was mere ill-nature—she wished for the picture herself.'

'I tell you what, Margaret,' said Dora, 'she did not wish any such thing, because uncle Henry pressed her to have it, and she refused, and made him put it by till this year, that you might try again.'

'I hate such hypocrites,' said Margaret, 'and she is so cold-hearted too. I used to kiss her and love her when first she came, but she never seemed to care a bit about it; and now I never go near her, if I can help it.'

'I should not mind anything,' said Dora, 'if she did not put one down so; but she has such a way of saying things are right, I can't bear it—as if we did not know what was right as well as she does. I shall teach her the difference between Miss Harrington and Miss Morton, I can tell her, when I come out.'

'And then, people call her pretty,' interrupted Margaret. 'It makes me so angry, sometimes, to hear them go on about her beautiful eyes, and her black hair. She need have some beauty, for she spends quite enough time in dressing herself, I know.'

Amy listened to these remarks in silent astonishment, and with an increasing feeling of dislike to Miss Morton. Not that she

agreed with Margaret as to her unkindness in the affair of the picture, for her strict sense of what was right and sincere told her, in a moment, that she could not have acted otherwise ; but it was impossible to hear so much said against a perfect stranger, without thinking that there must be some foundation for it, especially as Amy was accustomed to be very particular herself in everything she said, and had not yet learned to suspect her cousins of exaggeration.

‘How very sorry you must be,’ she exclaimed, at length, ‘that Miss Morton ever came to you !’

‘Sorry !’ repeated Margaret. ‘Yes, I think we are sorry ; but one thing I can tell you, Amy, she will not stay with us long. I resolved, directly after that business of the picture, that I would never rest till I got her out of the house ; and Dora feels the same.’

‘I beg your pardon,’ replied Dora ; ‘I do not care enough about her ; as long as she keeps to her own room, and does not plague me with constantly ringing in my ears that things are right, she may stay or not, as she likes.’

‘But,’ said Amy, ‘you cannot send her away ; it must be your mamma.’

‘What a simpleton you are !’ exclaimed Margaret, laughing. ‘There are a hundred ways of getting rid of a person you don’t like ; and I tell you I should have done it long ago, if it had not been for Rose, who is so fond of her, and such a pet of mamma’s, that she is humoured in everything. Why, how surprised you look, and frightened too.’

‘Only,’ said Amy, ‘I thought that my aunt would do just as she pleased, without asking any one.’

‘I can’t explain,’ said Margaret, ‘if you cannot understand ; but you will learn all about it when you have been a little at Emmerton with us ; and you will see, too, how she spoils Rose ; she makes her so foolish, that she cannot bear to go to any one else, except mamma, when she is in the room.’

‘Then Miss Morton must be very kind to her,’ said Amy.

‘Kind ! Yes, to be sure, she is ; she knows quite well that if it were not for Rose, she would not stay long in our family.’

‘And does she teach Rose entirely ?’ asked Amy.

‘Yes, now she does, though, I believe, mamma never intended it at first. But there was so much to be done with us, that it was very inconvenient having so young a child at the same time ; and so Emily Morton offered to take the charge of her, and she

has gone on ever since. It is very odd of mamma allowing it, when she dislikes governesses so ; but I think it would break Rose's heart if there were to be any alteration.'

'And what have you to do with her, then?'

'Oh! we have regular music and drawing lessons twice a-week, and she attends to us, at other times, besides ; and then we breakfast, and dine, and drink tea with her, and make her useful when we want her. She does everything almost for Rose ; but that is her own choice. But I daresay you will know all about her ways soon ; for when papa and mamma were talking of coming to Emmerton, I heard them say it would be a great advantage for you to learn of her ; and I daresay they will arrange for you to have music and drawing lessons with us. It will be so nice being together often.'

And Margaret gave Amy a kiss, which was very heartily returned. Amy looked at Dora, expecting something of the same kind from her ; but Dora was playing with her watch-chain, and appeared to be taking no notice.

'I shall like being with you,' replied Amy, 'but I shall not like to learn of Miss Morton. Mamma is so kind, I don't know what I should do if any one were cross to me.'

'But is your mamma quite regular with you?' asked Margaret.

'She used to be,' said Amy ; 'but lately she has been very often ill—she gets so unhappy about papa.'

'Oh!' observed Margaret, 'I heard papa and mamma talking about her last night, after you were gone, and they said——'

'Hush, Margaret!' said Dora, turning suddenly round ; 'it does not signify what they said. How can you be so thoughtless!' she added, in a lower tone.

Margaret was about to make an angry reply, but she was prevented by Amy, who anxiously begged to be told everything. Again Margaret would have spoken, but Dora a second time interposed ; and at the same moment Mrs Herbert appeared, and the conversation was interrupted. As they returned to the house, however, Amy remarked that Dora contrived to speak a few words to her sister alone ; and, when she afterwards repeated her entreaty, Margaret's reply was, that Dora and she thought it better not to tell. This did not satisfy Amy ; but she could not urge Margaret to do anything she felt was wrong ; and, after pondering in her own mind for some minutes what Mrs

Harrington could possibly have said, she, as usual, quieted her uneasiness by determining to talk to her mamma in the evening.

‘The carriage is waiting for you, my dears,’ said Mrs Herbert, as they walked towards the house ; ‘and, if you could find room in it for Amy and me, I should like to go with you as far as the rectory ; for Mrs Walton has asked us to spend the evening with her, and I am always glad to be saved a walk.’

Amy looked delighted, and ran up-stairs with great glee to get ready ; and Margaret followed, offering to help her.

‘Whom shall you see at the rectory?’ she said, as Amy was expressing her happiness in rather ecstatic terms. ‘Are there children of your own age?’

‘No,’ replied Amy ; ‘no one but Mr and Mrs Walton ; they had one child, but it died.’

‘But what shall you do? It must be so dreadfully dull with only old people.’

‘Oh no! it is never dull,—they are so kind, and the place is so pretty ; and sometimes Mrs Walton tells me stories about what she did when she was a little girl ; or, if they talk about things I don’t care for, there is a beautiful large book of fairy tales, and I sit up in a little window, away by myself, and fancy that all the things I read about happened in the forest. I sometimes make out all the places just as if they were real. You know one can fancy almost anything in a wood ; there are so many little winding walks and odd places, and there are some green spots of turf, with large trees all round, which look just like the fairies’ homes. I have named them all after the stories, and when I read I can see them quite plainly in my mind.’

‘Well! that is a strange way of amusing yourself,’ exclaimed Margaret, in a tone of astonishment ; ‘though, to be sure, I can understand the pleasure of reading a story, but then it must be about real people,—lords and ladies, I like! I never cared in the least about fairies and such unnatural things ; and I quite wonder to see Rose so pleased with a little book she has about them.’

Amy was in too great a hurry to reply, but dressed herself as quickly as possible, and in a few minutes was ready for her visit. The old rector was standing at the door as Mr Harrington’s carriage drove up, and looked rather alarmed at the sight of such an unexpected number of visitors ; but Mrs Herbert soon relieved his mind by introducing her nieces to him ; and, if Dora

had not been occupied with the contrast between the simplicity of the rectory and the grandeur of Emmerton, and Margaret with ridiculing the curiously-cut coat, brown wig, and gold shoe-buckles, which had been Mr Walton's constant style of dress for the last forty years, both might have been pleased with the affectionate interest expressed for them, and the many inquiries which were made for every member of the family. As it was, Mrs Herbert was hurt at their careless replies, and felt as angry as was possible for one so gentle, when she heard Margaret's loud whisper to her sister, 'Did you ever see such a quiz?'

Apparently Mr Walton did not observe this, for he still continued entreating them to come in, and assuring them that Mrs Walton would never forgive him if he allowed them to depart without her seeing them. Dora, who was always an inch taller and several years older, in her own estimation, whenever she found herself mistress of her father's handsome carriage, drew herself up with a consequential air, and regretted that it would not be in their power to stop, for they wished to be home by a certain hour.

'Is that really the case, my love?' said Mrs Herbert. 'Could you not spare one moment for Mrs Walton? She knew your mother when she was a child, and she has been longing to see you.'

'I dare say mamma will call in a day or two,' said Dora; 'we really are in a hurry now.'

'I will undertake to make your peace with your mamma,' said Mrs Herbert. 'You would not be detained five minutes.'

'I really am sorry,' persisted Dora, quite proud of the power of saying 'No' to persons older than herself; 'but I am afraid we must go home.'

Mr Walton, who had been listening to the debate with a mixed expression of amusement and regret in his countenance, now came forward, and, laying his hand on Dora's arm, said, 'My dear young lady, you are not accustomed to have a will of your own, I can quite see, because you are so glad to exercise it. Now, I never like to prevent young people from pleasing themselves, so you shall follow your inclination, and go home; but whenever this same inclination shall take another turn and bring you to the rectory, I will promise you a sincere welcome for the sake of your father and mother, and auld lang syne; and, now, good-bye.'

Dora felt abashed by the kindness with which this was said,

as well as by the reproof which she knew was intended ; but she put on an indifferent air, and, giving a hasty nod to Amy, and a few parting words to her aunt, reassured her offended dignity by calling out ‘home,’ in a loud voice, to the footman, who was standing at the door, and the carriage drove off. For a moment a slight pang of envy crossed Amy’s mind, as her cousins’ grandeur was contrasted with her own insignificance ; but it was soon forgotten when she found herself seated, as usual, on a low stool by the side of Mrs Walton, who, with one hand placed upon hers, and the other fondly smoothing her dark hair, heard with real pleasure her description of all she had been doing since her last visit ; and, as Amy became more and more animated, the old rector himself was attracted to the window, and for a few moments, while watching the bright eyes and sweet smile of his young favourite, could almost have imagined he was again listening to the voice of his own child. Mrs Walton was several years younger than her husband, but rheumatic attacks of a very painful kind had rendered her nearly helpless, so that the difference between them appeared much less than it really was. Age and infirmity had subdued her naturally quick, eager disposition, into a calm and almost heavenly peace, without in the least diminishing her interest in everything that was passing around her. Her mind, like her dress, seemed to be totally different from that of the everyday world ; the dress—was fashioned according to the custom of years gone by ; the mind—of those which were to come ; and few could converse with her without feelings of respect, almost amounting to awe, for her goodness, her patience, her meekness, her charity, her abstraction from all earthly cares. Amy could not as yet fully appreciate all her excellence, though she could understand it in some degree. She had never heard Mrs Walton spoken of but with reverence ; and, perhaps, half the pleasure she felt in talking so freely to her arose from the consciousness of being petted and loved by one to whom persons so much older than herself agreed in looking up. There was an additional reason for Amy’s enjoyment on this evening ; she had, willingly and unknown to her mother, resolved to give up her favourite volume of fairy tales, that she might go on with the frock for Susan Reynolds ; and even before the tea-things were brought in, she produced her basket, and began working industriously ; and from having thus denied her own inclination in one instance, everything else appeared doubly delightful.

‘Why, my little woman,’ said the rector, as he remarked her unusual occupation, ‘what makes your fingers so busy to-night? I thought you always studied the lives of the fairies whenever you came here.’

Mrs Herbert, who had been talking at the other end of the room, turned to see what Amy was about; and her smile was quite a sufficient reward for the sacrifice which had been made. ‘I did not think of reminding you of your work, my darling,’ she said; ‘but you will not regret giving up your pleasure for one evening for the sake of another.’

‘And who is this other?’ asked the rector.

Mrs Herbert told the story; and spoke highly in praise of Susan, and her attention to her mother.

‘She is in good hands,’ said Mr Walton, ‘I never knew either Mr or Mrs Saville take up a case of the kind without managing to be of great service; and whether the poor woman should live or die, you may depend upon the children having found a friend for life.’

‘And, my dear child,’ added Mrs Walton, ‘you will not forget you have a second purse at Emmerton rectory if it should be needed.’

‘I should be very ungrateful if I were to forget it,’ replied Mrs Herbert, as she pressed the worn but delicate hand which was held out to her; ‘though, now that my brother is at the Hall, I think my first appeal must be to him.’

‘I suspect I shall have a regular jubilee celebrated in the parish,’ said the rector. ‘Do you remember the first we ever had, some twenty years ago, when your brother came of age? We have not had such another since.’

‘There was one other great day, surely,’ said Mrs Walton. ‘My memory sometimes seems to get sadly confused even about things which passed years ago, and which, they say, are always remembered the best; but, surely, there was one other *fête*—what was it for?’

Amy looked up from her work, and whispered in Mrs Walton’s ear—‘Mamma and aunt Edith’s wedding-day.’

Mrs Herbert caught the words, and the tears started to her eyes. She turned away, and, taking up a newspaper which lay upon the table, began looking over the contents.

‘Ah! yes, my love, you are right,’ said Mrs Walton, in a low tone. And Mr Walton, anxious to change the subject, made some remarks upon a great fire which had taken place in a

neighbouring village, and the account of which was in that day's paper.

'Amy,' said Mrs Herbert, 'there is a very interesting story of the conduct of a little girl during the fire ; you may read it if you like.'

Amy took the paper and read what her mother pointed out ; and as she came to the end her eye caught the first words of another paragraph, and she exclaimed, 'Dear mamma, here is something about India.'

Mr Walton looked very grave. 'It is nothing good I am afraid,' he said ; 'I was in hopes you would have heard it before you came here : they say the war has broken out again.'

'The war !' repeated Mrs Herbert, in a suppressed tone of deep anxiety, as she seized the paper ; 'but it may be nothing to me.'

The paragraph was short, but decisive. There was no doubt the war had recommenced, and that the chance of obtaining tidings of Colonel Herbert was less than ever,—at least such was Mrs Herbert's fear, though Mr Walton did his utmost to convince her it could make no difference ; but whilst she listened to his words, they did not sink into her heart ; and she turned from the thought of her increased anxiety if her husband continued silent, to the danger of the war should he return into it, till it seemed impossible to find comfort in anything. Amy stood by her mother in silent suffering ; she felt as if she had been the cause of inflicting the pain by calling her attention to the paper ; but she could do nothing to relieve her, and was obliged to wait patiently, though sorrowfully, till her usual self-command was restored. After some time, Mrs Herbert was again able to allude to the subject of the war, and she then spoke of the probabilities and dangers which it involved, without hesitation ; but she was so much shaken by the unexpected news, that, notwithstanding the disappointment to all parties, no objection was made when she proposed returning home much earlier than usual. It was a melancholy conclusion to Amy's evening ; but Mr Walton endeavoured to comfort her by promising, if possible, to call very early the next day to see her ; and Mrs Walton held out the hope of another visit very soon. Amy's chief thought, however, was for her mamma ; and a wish arose in her mind, which she had often felt before, that she were a few years older, and could be of greater service ; and it was not till she had again received the often-repeated assurance of being now Mrs Herbert's greatest earthly treasure, and a real comfort to her in her distress,

that she could lie down happily to sleep, even though she had unburdened her mind of the chief events of the day, and of the secret between her cousins. Amy was not aware that, by doing this, she added to her mamma's anxiety, for everything convinced Mrs Herbert, more and more, that Dora and Margaret were very different companions from those she would have chosen for her child. But there was little to be feared while Amy continued so perfectly open ; and at any rate, it was better that she should be with them, whilst her mother was near to warn her against evil, than become acquainted with them, for the first time, when she might be obliged to live with them entirely. The secret, too, gave Mrs Herbert a pang, though she tried to persuade herself of what, in fact, was nearly the truth, that Dora had heard of the renewal of the war, and of the increased anxiety which it would bring ; happily she did not know that Mr Harrington had also expressed his opinion, that it would have been useless to expect any further tidings of Colonel Herbert, even if the peace had continued ; for he firmly believed that nothing but some dreadful event could have occasioned their total ignorance of his movements. Mrs Herbert, indeed, could hardly give Dora credit for so much thoughtfulness ; but in this she did her injustice. Dora could often be thoughtful and kind when her pride did not stand in the way ; and she could be sorry for the sufferings of others, when they were forced upon her notice, though she had never been taught to be upon the watch for them ; whilst even her haughtiness did not prevent her from feeling an interest in the quiet grief which was expressed in every feature of her aunt's countenance, and which seemed constantly to check every happier feeling.

CHAPTER VI.

SEVERAL days passed before Amy again saw her cousins—there were so many arrangements to be made in their new home, that no convenient moment could be found for paying a visit to the cottage ; and during this time Mrs Herbert had very much recovered her tranquillity, and began even to hope that the war, terrible though it seemed, might be the means of bringing her some tidings of Colonel Herbert.

The last letter she had received from him had mentioned his intention of making an expedition into the interior of the country ; and a friend, who had returned to England soon afterwards, confirmed the fact of his departure. His silence might be accounted for, by his having entrusted letters to private hands, and by the difficulty of communication in the distant province to which he had gone ; but now that the war had again broken out, she could not avoid hoping that he would make every effort to return, and that she should see his name in the public despatches, if anything should occur to prevent his writing. The dangers to which he might be exposed, and which had at first so startled her, seemed nothing to the wearying anxiety she had lately suffered ; and even the mention of him in the list of the wounded, she felt, would be a relief.

Amy could not entirely enter into all her mother's solicitude, but she loved to hear her talk of Colonel Herbert, and to fancy what he must be like from the miniature which had been taken before he left England ; and she remarked, also, that it was a relief to her mamma to speak of him ; and she seldom appeared so cheerful as when she had been either spending half an hour alone in her own chamber, or answering the questions which Amy was never tired of asking. An accidental allusion, indeed, would often bring the tears into Mrs Herbert's eyes, but a lengthened conversation had a very different effect, for the thought of her husband was associated with all that was excellent and noble ; and as she dwelt upon his high character, and the principles with which all the actions of his life were imbued, she could not doubt that the blessing of Heaven would attend him wherever he might be.

The constant pressure of anxiety rendered the presence of strangers in general very painful to Mrs Herbert ; and the only person who was admitted to see her at all times was Mr Walton. Whatever, therefore, might be the interest felt in her brother's family, she did not regret that the distance from the Hall was likely to prevent anything like daily intercourse ; and Amy, too, was not sorry, for her cousins did not quite please her ; and, though she had been very much amused by them, she was conscious that only with her mamma could she feel perfectly safe from harm. There was, in consequence, a mixture of alarm and pleasure in her mind upon being told, about three days after her visit to the rectory, that she was to spend the next day at the Hall, going quite early and returning late ; and the alarm was

not a little increased when her mamma read the postscript of the note:—‘I am anxious that Amy should become acquainted with Miss Morton, and get rid of her fears before she begins taking lessons.’

‘What do you say to that, Amy?’ asked Mrs Herbert. ‘Do you think you shall be able to go twice a week, sometimes, perhaps, without me, to learn music and drawing of a stranger?’

‘O mamma! indeed I don’t know. But when did you settle it? You never told me. Is it really to be so? I don’t think I can go without you.’

‘And I think,’ said Mrs Herbert, ‘that you can and will do everything that is thought right. Is not that the proper way of looking at it? It does not sound very agreeable at first, but, by and by, you will be sorry when the day comes to stay at home.’

‘Oh no, mamma! never. I shall always dislike learning of Miss Morton; my cousins have said so much against her.’

‘It is rather hard to make up your mind beforehand,’ said Mrs Herbert; ‘you must try and judge for yourself whether she is really everything they represent; you know it is possible they may be in the wrong.’

Amy recollected Margaret’s complaint about the picture, and felt that this was quite true, but her prejudice still remained; and when, on their arrival at the Hall, she was told to find her way by herself to the oriel-room, which was now converted into a schoolroom, she hung back in some fear; and though at length obliged to go, it was with reluctant steps; and for several moments she stood with the handle of the door in her hand, unable to summon courage to enter the room alone.

‘Who can that be fidgeting at the door?’ was exclaimed by some one inside; and Amy in despair opened it.

Dora was seated at the window reading, Margaret was drawing, and Miss Morton writing, with little Rose on a high stool by her side, intently occupied with a sum in subtraction.

The appearance of the room was totally changed since Amy had last seen it. Books, music, drawings, prints, and work, were to be seen in every direction; the old damask chairs had been removed, and lighter ones introduced; the table had been covered with a handsome cloth, and the floor with a new carpet; a cabinet piano had taken the place of the oak chiffonier; and the only thing that Amy fully recognised as an old acquaintance was her aunt Edith’s picture, which still hung over the mantel-

shelf. Miss Morton came forward to meet her, and shook hands so kindly that Amy's prejudice was for the instant shaken. Margaret overpowered her with kisses; and Dora, in her usual indifferent manner, just spoke, and then again took up her book; while little Rose quite forgot the difficult sum, as she sat with her eyes fixed upon her new cousin.

Amy felt very awkward, and as if she had intruded where she had no business; but Miss Morton soon relieved her embarrassment by giving her a portfolio of drawings to look at, and asking some questions about her own occupations, in a voice which sounded more like her mamma's than any she had yet heard at Emmerton.

'You must not mind our being rather silent now,' she said, at length, when Amy seemed more comfortable, 'for Miss Harrington is reading for her mamma, and talking interrupts her.'

'Come and sit by me, Amy,' said Margaret; 'and see how I am getting on with my drawing.'

'It would be better not,' observed Miss Morton; 'whispering is quite as likely to distract your sister's attention as talking out loud.'

Margaret did not take any notice of this advice, but made a sign to her cousin to come to the table.

'Not now, Margaret,' said Amy; 'I shall be quite well amused with these drawings.'

A cloud passed over Margaret's very pretty face, and, for the moment, she looked positively ugly, while she muttered, 'How unkind! cross thing! I knew she would always interfere.'

Amy was vexed, but did not move, and soon became interested in watching Miss Morton's manner to little Rose. It was very quiet and very gentle, but it was quite clear that her will was law; for Rose, whose thoughts had been diverted by the unusual visitor, found great difficulty in finishing her task, and was turned back several times without daring to make a complaint, though a few tears filled her bright hazel eyes, when, after three attempts, the sum was again pronounced incorrect. Margaret, forgetting that she had accused Miss Morton of spoiling Rose, and only anxious to prove her in the wrong, cast a look of triumph at Amy, certain that she would agree with her in thinking it very harsh. But Amy, though so young, was quite capable of discovering the difference between firmness and severity, and did not at all dislike Miss Morton for being particular.

‘Indeed, you must be quick, Rose,’ said Miss Morton, as Dora closed her book, and Margaret prepared to put up her drawing; ‘you see your sisters are ready for dinner, and we are to have it to-day half an hour earlier than usual, that we may walk to Colworth; you would not like to stay at home.’

Poor little Rose looked very unhappy, and began counting the figures again; but her haste only made her the more confused.

‘It is very hard,’ she said, as she offered the slate again to Miss Morton, ‘and Amy is here.’

Miss Morton smiled, and so sweetly, that it seemed impossible to be afraid of her.

‘Well! that is an excuse, I will allow, only it must not be made often; but come and stand by me, and we will do it together.’

Rose dried her eyes; and in a very short time the sum was finished, and she went with Miss Morton to get ready for dinner.

‘What do you think of her?’ asked Dora and Margaret in one breath, almost before Miss Morton was out of the room.

‘She seems rather strict,’ replied Amy; ‘but I don’t think I should be very much afraid of her.’

‘But do you think she is pretty?’ inquired Margaret, eagerly.

‘Oh yes!’ answered Amy, ‘very pretty; prettier than almost any person I ever saw before.’

Margaret’s lip curled, and, in a short, contemptuous tone, she said, ‘There is no accounting for taste. To be sure, you have not seen many people in your life; but, for my part, I can’t say I like such black beauties.’

‘Nor white ones either,’ said Dora. ‘I never heard you praise a pretty person yet. I don’t think Emily Morton such an angel as most people do; but she is twenty times prettier than you are, Margaret, or ever will be.’

‘That is as others think,’ said Margaret, casting a self-satisfied look at herself in the glass. ‘We must go and prepare for dinner now.’ And she ran out of the room.

Dora was about to follow, but, recollecting her cousin, she stopped, and said, ‘You will not mind staying here for a few minutes by yourself, shall you, dear, while the servants are bringing the dinner?’

Amy thought she should have preferred going with her cousins to being alone in the room with the tall men-servants; but she made no objections, and Dora left her.

During the short interval that elapsed before their return, she amused herself by endeavouring to fancy what Emmerton used to be, and comparing it with its present condition ; but she had chosen a difficult task. All was so changed within a few days, that it seemed as if months had gone by since her last visit with her mamma ; and when at last she had succeeded in recollecting exactly the position of the chairs and tables, and the cold, desolate look of the oriel-room, she was startled from her dream by the voice of the gray-haired butler, who, in a very respectful manner, begged pardon for disturbing her, but wished to know if Miss Harrington were ready for dinner ; and, after such an interruption, a further effort was useless.

Dora sat at the head of the table, though she could not carve, which appeared very strange to Amy ; and she remarked, too, that her cousins addressed Miss Morton by her Christian name, but that she in reply always spoke of Miss Harrington and Miss Margaret ; indeed, in every possible way, there seemed to be a determination to show her that she was considered quite an inferior person.

‘Will you all walk to Colworth this afternoon?’ asked Miss Morton. ‘Rose and I are going on a little business to Mrs Saville.’

‘I thought it was settled,’ replied Dora ; ‘we said we would at breakfast-time.’

‘Yes,’ answered Miss Morton ; ‘but I fancied I had heard something about a wish of your mamma’s, that you should go in the carriage with her.’

‘Oh ! for a stupid drive. I believe there was something said ; but I had much rather go to Colworth.’

‘But what will your mamma wish?’ inquired Miss Morton, very gently.

‘I can arrange with mamma myself, I hope,’ was the reply ; ‘I prefer going to Colworth.’

‘You must allow me to beg that you will mention it to Mrs Harrington first,’ said Miss Morton ; ‘she was very much annoyed with me for walking with you yesterday, when she wanted you.’

Dora’s only answer was, what she considered a very dignified look ; and at this moment a servant entered with a message, desiring that Miss Harrington would be ready to go out with her mamma at three o’clock.

‘I know what it is for !’ exclaimed Dora ; ‘we are to call at

Rochford Park. Mamma wants me to get acquainted with Miss Cunningham, and I am sure I don't want to know her.'

'Is not Lady Rochford a great invalid?' asked Miss Morton, anxious to divert Dora's attention.

'Yes, and that is the reason mamma is going to see her. I believe they were at school together, or something of that kind.'

'I have heard it is such a beautiful place,' said Amy; 'I should so like to see it.'

'Then I wish you would go instead of me,' replied Dora; 'I am sick of beautiful places. What is the use of going six miles to see what you have just as well at home! It is all very natural for people who live in cottages to wish to look at fine houses; but really it is far too much trouble for me.'

'It is not merely the seeing fine houses,' said Miss Morton, 'but the grounds and the scenery may be very different. I should soon get tired of looking at large rooms and gilt furniture; but trees and flowers must always give one pleasure.'

'There cannot be any better flowers at Rochford Park than we had at Wayland,' persisted Dora; 'every one said the conservatory was the finest in the county.'

'Yes,' replied Miss Morton; 'but now you are at Emmerton, it may be different.'

'I never could see any great pleasure in looking at other persons' beautiful things,' continued Dora; 'and really I don't know what right Lord Rochford has to have anything better than papa. I heard mamma say yesterday, that our family was much older than his, and yet people make such a fuss about him; and he is going to be an earl soon, and then Miss Cunningham will be lady something.'

'Lady Lucy Cunningham,' said Margaret. 'Morris told me about it this morning, and Bridget told her. I must say I should like to be called "lady" of all things; should not you, Amy?'

'Yes,' answered Amy, 'I think,—I am sure I should.'

Miss Morton smiled. 'It would not make you at all happier, my dear,' she said; 'because, if you cared about it, you would be proud and disagreeable, and few persons would love you; and if you did not, you might just as well be Miss Herbert.'

'But is there any harm in wishing it?' asked Amy.

'We can scarcely help wishing for things,' replied Miss Morton; 'I mean we can scarcely help the wish coming into our minds; but I think it is wrong not to try and get rid of it, and be contented with the situation in which we are placed.'

Amy felt that this was exactly what her mamma would have said, and she began to forget all that had been told her against Miss Morton, and to wish she would go on talking ; but it seemed quite an effort to her to say so much, for she spoke in a very low, timid voice, and when she had finished, looked at Dora, as if expecting that something impertinent would follow.

Dora, however, took no notice of her observation, but declared she would rather be Miss Harrington than anything else. ‘ I heard papa talking to some people the other day,’ she said ; ‘ and he told them he would much prefer being an old country gentleman to a new-made nobleman. And I am sure I agree with him ; it must be all pride and nonsense to wish for a title.’

Miss Morton roused herself again to speak. ‘ I am afraid,’ she said, ‘ there is just as much pride, my dear Miss Harrington, in your caring about belonging to an old family, and living in a large house, and having money, and servants, and carriages, as in considering it a great thing to have a title. Everything of the kind tempts us to be proud.’

‘ Then it is happy for those who have no such temptation,’ said Dora, scornfully.

‘ Yes, indeed, it is,’ replied Miss Morton, so meekly, and yet so earnestly, that any one less haughty than Dora must have been touched. But Dora was perfectly insensible ; she did not, however, continue the subject ; and finishing her dinner quickly, saying she had several things to do before three o’clock, without making any apology to Miss Morton, left the room directly the dessert was placed on the table.

Margaret expressed satisfaction at her sister’s absence, as she declared it was much more agreeable to her to have her cousin all to herself during their walk ; but Amy would willingly have lingered by Miss Morton’s side, to hear something of her conversation with Rose.

Margaret, however, insisted upon her keeping at a considerable distance, whilst she again repeated the history of all she had been accustomed to do at Wayland, adding to it a description of her last new dresses, and the beautiful presents she had received on her birthday, until Amy’s curiosity was greatly excited, and once more a feeling of envy arose as she thought of the difference between herself and her cousin. But she was just beginning to be aware of this fault ; and although the wish to have similar presents returned again and again, as Margaret eagerly told over all her treasures, it was accompanied each time by the

knowledge that it was wrong ; and she felt sorry and vexed with herself, as she remembered how little her mamma would approve of what was passing in her mind. Still the conversation was very amusing, and the time passed so quickly that Amy was quite surprised when she found herself at the lane leading to Colworth parsonage. A girl, whom she immediately recognised as Susan Reynolds, was standing by the shrubbery gate ; and Amy's first impulse was to speak to her : but she was crying bitterly ; and Amy, though longing to know the cause of her tears, was too timid to interrupt her, and, without making any remark, followed Miss Morton and her cousins into the house. When, however, the first restraint of the visit had a little diminished, and Mrs Saville began asking some questions about her mamma, she ventured to inquire whether Susan's mother was worse, and whether this had occasioned her distress.

'Poor Susan has enough to make her unhappy,' said Mrs Saville. 'Her mother died last night ; and though there is in fact nothing to grieve for, as she was a truly religious person, yet it is a dreadful trial to her children ; and Susan is left with the sole charge of her little brothers and sisters ; but she is an extremely well-disposed girl, and I hope we shall manage to do something for her by and by.'

'I believe you have a very good school in the village,' said Miss Morton. 'Mrs Harrington is anxious to take a young girl into her service, to be under the lady's maid ; and she thought you would excuse her troubling you with asking whether you could recommend one. I rather think several of her best servants were educated at Colworth.'

'I am afraid,' said Mrs Saville, 'that it will be rather a difficult thing to find one suited to the situation. The girl I should have chosen has just left us, and the others are all too young.'

Amy thought of Susan Reynolds, but she did not like to name her. Mrs Saville, however, did, to her great satisfaction. 'I can answer,' she said, 'for her good principles, cleverness, and sweet temper, though I know nothing of her capabilities in other ways ; of course, she would have everything to learn—but I think you would find her very docile. It would be an admirable thing if you can answer for her being kept strictly under the eye of the lady's maid ; for she must do something for herself, as the grandmother, who will take care of the younger children, will find them quite a sufficient charge ; and if she should not suit Mrs Harrington, she can return to me at any moment. What she will

say to the notion herself, I cannot tell, for just now she is so overpowered with grief, that she can think of nothing but her mother. But I will take her to Emmerton in about a week, or ten days' time, if Mrs Harrington would like to see her.'

'Do have her,' whispered Amy to Miss Morton, feeling extremely anxious that the affair should be settled at once, and, in her eagerness, forgetting her shyness.

'It is not for me to decide, my dear,' said Miss Morton. 'I am afraid your aunt will hardly be inclined to have a stranger.'

'But she is so good,' continued Amy; 'and she has such a nice manner.'

Miss Morton smiled, and said, that 'even these qualifications might not be all that would be required.' And then, turning to Mrs Saville, she added, 'If you could bring the little girl to Emmerton, you would, I am sure, confer a favour on Mrs Harrington, for her time, at present, is very much occupied.'

Mrs Saville willingly agreed to this; and Amy left the parsonage in great delight, having fully settled in her own mind, that Susan Reynolds would soon be established at Emmerton, and fancying what a happy change it would be, from the miserable hovel in which she had last seen her. She did not know that no earthly comforts could make amends for the loss of her home; and no earthly friend, even if she should find one at Emmerton, could be to her as her mother; for no one can fully understand the blessing of a mother's love, till it is taken away for ever.

As they passed the shrubbery gate, they perceived Susan standing in the same position in which they had left her, and still crying, as if her heart would break.

'Do you think I might speak to her?' asked Amy of Miss Morton. 'I should like to tell her how sorry I am about her mother.'

Miss Morton hesitated. 'Perhaps,' she said, 'the poor girl would rather not be noticed; but, if you wish it very much, you may just speak, and pass on.'

'I should like to do it, if you would go with me,' replied Amy. 'But I never saw any one so unhappy before.'

Emily Morton sighed as she thought of Mrs Herbert's pale face, and how soon poor Amy might be called to grieve from the same cause; and then, in an instant, a scene which was never entirely banished from her mind, came vividly before her,—the darkened chamber, the anxious faces, the tears of overpowering sorrow, which were ever associated in her mind, with the recol-

lection of her own mother's deathbed ; and, without making any further objection, she followed Amy to the spot where Susan was standing, with a feeling of sympathy, which can only be experienced by those who have shared the same grief. Susan was too much absorbed to notice their approach, and Amy scarcely knew what to say ; she could only repeat,—‘ Don't cry so, Susan, I am very sorry for you,’ besides asking a few questions about the other children, which Susan was quite unable to answer. But Miss Morton understood better what was to be done. She took the poor girl's hand in hers, and spoke so kindly, that Susan forgot that she was listening to the voice of a stranger ; and she said what Amy could not say. She told her that she had suffered the same loss, and therefore knew well how great it was, and that it must seem now, as if she never could be happy again ; and then she reminded her of her mother's goodness, and that, if she endeavoured to exert herself, and do her duty, she would live with her for ever, in a world, where there was no more sorrow. And, as she went on, Susan's sobs became fainter and fainter ; and at last she was able to thank Miss Morton and Amy for their kindness, and to say that she would try to do what was right—she would do anything to be with her mother again. Amy listened, with the hope that she should, one day, be able to talk in the same way, and with an increased feeling of respect for Miss Morton, which she could not avoid expressing to Margaret when she returned to her. But Margaret was not willing to agree in any praise of which Emily was the object ; and only expressed her wonder, that Amy could take so much interest in a girl whom she had hardly ever seen before. ‘ As for her being unhappy, she was sorry for it, but she could not help it ; and there were a great many people in the world in the same situation. She was not worse off than others ; and in a short time, there was no doubt, she would get comfortable again, especially if she went to the Hall to live.’ And so Margaret remained in contented indifference ; and Amy wondered how her cousin could have learned such a strange way of thinking, and determined that she would be the last person to whom she herself would go for comfort in suffering.

Dora returned from her drive soon after they reached home, and was immediately assailed by a host of questions as to what she had done, and whom she had seen, and whether Rochford Park was more beautiful than Wayland. But Dora was not in a communicative mood ; she could make herself very agreeable

when she chose, and could describe things in a very amusing manner; but this day her whim was to be silent; and all the information obtained was, that Rochford Park was a very good sort of place, that Miss Cunningham was like the rest of the world, only not so tall as she was, and that Lord Rochford talked of bringing her over to Emmerton soon, to spend the day, and then they would be able to judge for themselves.

‘How stupid you are, Dora!’ said Margaret, when this most unsatisfactory account had been given. ‘I thought you would entertain us all by telling us what you had seen; but you might just as well have stayed at home.’

‘I am sure I wish I had,’ replied Dora. ‘It was very hot and very dusty, and I am very tired; so, now, I hope we shall have tea as soon as possible. Do, Emily, look into Morris’s room, when you go up-stairs, and tell her I am waiting to be dressed.’

‘Can’t I go?’ asked Amy, feeling instantly that the request was not a proper one.

Dora stared. She was not accustomed to see any one put themselves out of their way to help another, and she was conscious that Amy’s offer was almost a reproach to her, for there were times when she was aware of her want of consideration for Miss Morton. ‘It will be no trouble,’ she said; ‘Emily has done it a hundred times before.’

‘I would rather go,’ persisted Amy; ‘I know very well where the room is.’ And without waiting for an answer, she ran up-stairs.

‘It may be very good-natured,’ muttered Dora to Margaret; ‘but I don’t see why she should interfere.’ And, with a pouting lip and her usual scornful toss of the head, she followed her cousin.

The rest of the evening was not agreeable to Amy, for Dora’s ill-humour exhibited itself very plainly; and neither Emily Morton’s kindness nor Margaret’s kisses could make her forget that one of the party was discontented; and she was not sorry when her mamma appeared in the schoolroom, prepared to return home. Mrs Harrington accompanied her in a more gracious mood than ordinary; she even patted Amy on the shoulder, and called her ‘dear;’ but the next moment the harshness of her voice, as she remarked something that was amiss in Margaret’s manner, recalled all Amy’s fears, and she shrank away from her aunt with a feeling of even greater awe than at their first meeting.

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER this visit Amy's prejudice against Miss Morton considerably decreased; and she made no objection, when the arrangement was finally made, that she should go to Emmerton twice a week to receive drawing and music lessons. For many reasons it was a great pleasure, as she was amused by her cousins when they were in good humour, and the novelty and variety had always charms; besides which, Mr Harrington made her a present of a donkey, to carry her backwards and forwards when it was not convenient for the carriage to be sent; and a ride through the forest, with the man servant walking by her, in the lovely summer mornings, compensated for any disagreeables in the remainder of the day. She usually returned to the cottage soon after the early dinner in the schoolroom, and some of the party often walked back part of the way with her; or if she were quite alone, old Stephen generally contrived to hobble for about a mile by her side, giving her the history of all the cows, horses, dogs, and sheep about the place, almost all of whom were Amy's old acquaintances, though she saw little of them now that her time at the Hall was so differently occupied. And so the bright months of summer passed away, and Amy became accustomed to the great change in her life, and began to wonder how she could have liked the house in its former desolate state, and to associate with the old trees in the park and the lovely walks over the downs, thoughts of rambles with her cousins, or conversations with Emily Morton (whom she soon felt inclined to love as she became more acquainted with her character), instead of the old-fashioned ladies and gentlemen with whom she had formerly been accustomed to people the Hall and every place about it.

In one thing alone there was no change. The chapel still remained unopened from week to week, apparently forgotten, except when visitors were in the house, and it was exhibited as a show, for the purpose of passing away a few idle moments. The rich light streamed through the painted glass of the east window, and chequered the marble floor and shone upon the grotesque oak carving; but there was no one to admire its radiance. The splendidly-bound Bible lay uncared for upon the desk; the family-prayer books, moth-eaten and decayed, were piled upon the seats; and the only thing which bore the semblance

of devotion in the place, once hallowed by daily prayer, was the marble figure of the first lord of Emmerton, who, stretched upon his tomb, with his clasped hands raised to heaven, seemed silently to reproach all who entered with their forgetfulness of the privilege he had so highly valued. Amy could not feel this neglect of the chapel as keenly as her mother, for she could not remember the time when it was otherwise; but she could feel the disappointment of her curiosity to see it as it had been described to her; and something told her that it must be wrong to think so lightly of it, and entirely to omit the practice of daily family prayer, even if circumstances interfered with the performance of the regularly-appointed service; and at last she became quite shy of talking about it; and when she knew the chapel was open, she would steal into it by herself, and indulge some of her former reveries, and then return to the schoolroom without venturing to mention what she had been doing.

This was one among many instances in which the difference of education between Amy and her cousins was easily to be discovered. With all Amy's occupations, and all her pleasures, her mother had carefully endeavoured to blend ideas which might improve and raise her mind. She had taught her that the days of her childhood were the most important of her life, for they were those in which habits must be formed either for good or evil, which would be her blessing or her curse for ever. She had told her of the first sinful nature which she brought with her into the world at her birth, and of the second holy nature which had been given her at baptism, and had warned her that the whole of her life would be a struggle between the two—a struggle which was begun from the very first moment of her becoming sensible of the difference between right and wrong. And thus Amy had learned to look upon what are often considered trifling faults in a child—ill-temper, indolence, vanity, greediness, and similar evil dispositions—as real sins in the eye of God, which must be checked at the very beginning by all who wish to continue what they were made at their baptism—His children. She did not think, with her cousins, that it signified little what she did as a child, for that the time would, of course, arrive when she should be able at once to become good; but in the little everyday trials, to which she was now exposed more frequently than ever, she endeavoured to conquer any irritation of temper, or inclination to indolence, or envy; and every day the task became less difficult. Perhaps this kind of education had caused her to be

more thoughtful than is usual at her age, and made her pleasures of a graver and quieter cast; but in reality it added to her happiness far more than it apparently took away. It made her love the blue sky, and the trees and flowers, not merely for their beauty, but because she knew they were especial blessings sent to her; and that every day's enjoyment of them was provided for her by God, in the same way as her mother provided for her pleasure in other things. It made her sensible of the holiness of those places which were especially dedicated to the worship of God; and the silence of the beautiful chapel at Emmerton had as great a charm for her as the gay scenes which her cousins often described had for them; and, above all, it gave her that quietness and cheerfulness of mind which only those can possess who really try in everything to do what they know to be their duty. But the same education which had made Amy think so differently from her cousins, made her also feel that they could not sympathise with her; and thus, though Emmerton was a source of constant amusement, it was principally because at the time she was enjoying it she could look forward to the evening, when she should return to her mother, and give her an account of what she had been doing. Her walks, her books, her music, her drawing,—all would have ceased to charm without this; but with it, even Dora's petulance and Margaret's selfishness caused only a momentary annoyance. Whatever discomfort she might find at the Hall, there was always a bright smile and a fond kiss awaiting her at the cottage; and the enjoyment of her mother's love there was nothing to mar. For Amy did not notice what a stranger would have looked on with fear; she did not see the increasing paleness of Mrs Herbert's complexion, the hectic flush upon her cheek, the transparency of her delicate hands; the change was so gradual as to be in general unobserved, or, if remarked by other persons, there was always some reason to be given for it,—either the heat, or a bad night, or the disappointment of not hearing from India—the last being, in fact, the real cause of the evil.

During this time Mrs Herbert watched her child most anxiously, to discover the effect which the intimacy with her cousins might produce upon her mind, but she saw little to make her uneasy; for, however Amy might enjoy the grandeur of Emmerton, she seldom expressed any wish to possess it; and day after day, and week after week, she returned to her quiet home with the same gentle, humble, open spirit with which she

had left it. But still her mother was not quite satisfied. She knew that while Amy had no rivals, the strength of the temptation was but slight. She went as a visitor, and, to a certain degree, a stranger, and her cousins were pleased to see her, and in general her wishes were consulted; but Mrs Herbert looked forward to the time when she might be obliged to live at Emmerton altogether, perhaps as a dependent, certainly as a person quite inferior to Mr Harrington's daughters; and she could not but fear lest Amy might then be sensible of a false pride of which she was now unconscious. Yet, although the constant communication between the Hall and the cottage had had little effect upon Amy, it was not entirely so with her cousins. Margaret's character, indeed, was not one to be easily improved, for her extreme vanity prevented her being in the least alive to her own faults or to the virtues of others. She remarked that Amy was seldom or never selfish; but she only liked her for it because it gratified her own indolence and self-will; it never entered her head that in this her cousin was her superior, and that therefore she ought to imitate her; and as for her sincerity and humility, it required a much purer mind than Margaret's to understand why such qualities were good. If Amy's praises were sounded by Emily Morton, Margaret would seize upon some trifling occasion in which they might have differed, or some passing hasty expression, to prove that every one was mistaken in their opinion of her, and that she was no better than others; whilst the next moment, if her cousin entered, she would try her patience and her good-nature, perhaps, by sending her to a distant part of the house for a book, or begging her to finish some tiresome piece of work, and then think she had made quite sufficient amends for the trouble by covering her with kisses, asking her if she did not love her dearly, and declaring she was the most good-natured little thing in the world. At first Amy did not understand this; she thought Margaret affectionate and Dora cold; and she turned from the one and clung to the other; but this could not last long, for Margaret's selfishness was too great to be concealed by any show of warmth, and after a little time she wondered why she should be so uncomfortable when Margaret put her arm so kindly round her neck, and asked her to do the very thing that she knew was most disagreeable to her, and why she should be annoyed when she chose the most beautiful flowers or the finest fruit for herself, and then said, 'You won't mind, will you, darling?' It seemed almost wrong,

yet Amy could not help the feeling. With Dora, however, it was very different ; she had serious faults, and they were so evident as to be perceived even upon a first acquaintance ; but she had also qualities upon which a very superior character might be formed, and amongst them, perhaps, the most valuable was sincerity. Whatever she said was strictly true ; there was no pretence of affection which was not felt, no affectation of virtues which were not possessed ; she was too reserved to express all her feelings, but those she did express were perfectly real ; she was too proud to confess herself in the wrong of her own accord, but she would never for a moment stoop to the slightest meanness to screen herself ; and this it was which formed the connecting link between her and Amy, for it was the one thing to which Dora was peculiarly alive, and half her quarrels with Margaret, when they were not caused by opposition to her will, arose from her perceiving some little cunning or paltry motive, which her sister tried to conceal but could not. If Amy had not been true and candid, Dora would have cared little for her other qualities ; but when once she discovered that her cousin's lightest word was to be depended on, and that she never hesitated to acknowledge an error, whatever might be the consequence, she began to respect her, and to remark the other points in which she was superior ; and though she would hardly have borne a rebuke for her ill-temper or her pride, even from her father, she would think over some instance in which Amy had shown self-command or humility, with a feeling of self-reproach she had seldom known before. And thus quite unconsciously, Amy was exercising an influence for good, over the mind of a person older and cleverer than herself, merely by the quiet, unobtrusive manner in which she performed her daily duties. But as yet this made no difference in Dora's manner ; she was still proud and irritable, and often most unkind at the very moment she was feeling the greatest respect, and Amy's chief pleasure at Emmerton soon arose from being with Emily Morton and little Rose. Rose, indeed, was not much of a companion ; but she was a very interesting and beautiful child, and Emily Morton's great love for her was in itself quite sufficient to make her a source of pleasure to Amy. At first, when the music and drawing lessons began, Amy's hand shook and her voice almost trembled whenever Miss Morton found fault with her ; but she soon discovered there was not the slightest occasion for fear, since even Margaret's inattention only gave rise to a serious look, and a hope, expressed in a grave tone,

that, to please her mamma, she would be more careful for the future. And when the awe had subsided, Amy began to look forward to Miss Morton's approbation, and to wish she would notice her as she did Rose ; and when vexed at her cousins' neglect, she endeavoured to make some amends by bringing her the prettiest flowers from her own garden, or working some little thing which she thought might gratify her, till Emily, touched by attentions she had lately been so little accustomed to receive, anticipated Amy's visits as one of the chief enjoyments of her lonely life, and bestowed upon her a considerable portion of the affection which had once been exclusively given to little Rose.

It was some time, however, before Amy discovered that Miss Morton was indeed fond of her ; she was very gentle and very kind, but this she was to every one, and her extreme reserve and shyness prevented the expression of her real feeling ; besides, they were very seldom alone ; and when Dora and Margaret were in the room, Emily seemed to shrink into herself, and never to speak except when absolutely obliged. From her childhood Emily Morton had had a peculiar dread of anything like scorn or ridicule, a dread which her friends had often vainly endeavoured to overcome, until her sense of religion had taught her how wrong it was to indulge it, and even then something of the feeling remained. The careless jest upon any little awkwardness, or the thought that she was forgotten when others were noticed, which had brought the tears into her eyes when a child, caused as keen a pang as she grew older, though her self-command prevented its being shown ; and the suffering she had undergone from the moment of her entrance into Mr Harrington's family, it would be difficult to describe. At school she had always felt herself on an equality with her young companions, and in general, from her accomplishments, their superior ; but at Wayland Court every one looked down upon her. Mr Harrington scarcely thought of her at all ; and Mrs Harrington considered her as little above the level of an upper servant, useful in a party to sing and play, and useful in teaching Dora and Margaret to do the same, but in other respects very slightly differing from Morris. Dora scorned her as inferior in rank and wealth, and disliked her because on certain occasions she was bound to obey her ; and Margaret envied her beauty, and was angry with her straightforward simplicity ; and when all this was gradually discovered, the feeling that

arose in Emily Morton's mind was most bitter. Every trifling neglect, every proud look, every taunting word, brought the colour to her cheek, and a host of painful recollections to her mind ; and though too gentle to retaliate, she thought over them in private till they seemed almost unendurable, and she was often on the point of leaving Mr Harrington's house and seeking for another situation. But there was a principle within that soon brought her to a more patient spirit. She had been placed at Wayland by the only friend on whom she could depend, and to leave it would be, she knew, a cause of great anxiety, and the 'charity which beareth all things' at length enabled her to submit to the trial without a murmur. She learned not only to listen without reply to undeserved reproofs, but to ask herself whether there might not even be some ground for them. She learned to return the greatest neglect with the most thoughtful attention, the harshest speeches with the most considerate kindness, till the calmness of her own mind became a sufficient recompense for all her difficulties ; and the person most to be envied in the family of a man who had thousands at his disposal, worldly rank, the respect of his friends, and the applause of his dependents, was the young girl whom even the very servants considered themselves privileged to mention with contempt.

Emily Morton's situation, however, would have been very different but for little Rose. She was the one charm of her life, the only thing that seemed yet left her in which to take a deep and affectionate interest ; and till her arrival at Emmerton, Rose was the one subject of her daily thoughts. It was long before she could believe that Amy was indeed so different from her cousins ; and still longer ere her habitual shyness could be so far overcome as to enable her to talk, except at the times of the regular lessons. The constant impression on her mind was, that every one was ridiculing her ; and this made her so unwilling to speak unless when obliged, that Amy often feared she never should be at ease with her. The reserve between them would probably have continued for even a greater length of time, had it not been for the introduction of Susan Reynolds into the place of under lady's maid soon after the walk to Colworth. Mrs Harrington was pleased with her appearance, and still more with Mrs Saville's recommendation ; and although Bridget looked sulky at first, because she was not consulted on the occasion, and old Stephen grumbled in private, because his little grand-daughter had not been chosen, no other person in

the house found fault with the arrangement ; and even Morris, the quickest, neatest, and most particular of her particular race, declared she had never met with so clever and well-behaved a girl for her age.

This was joyful news to Amy, who, of course, fancied that now all Susan's troubles were at an end ; for every one said it was the most fortunate thing in the world that she had found so good a situation ; but when several weeks had passed, and her eyes were still often filled with tears, and her voice had the same melancholy resigned tone as at first, Amy became half-vexed, and, perhaps, a little impatient. It seemed almost like ingratitude ; and she ventured one day to ask Emily Morton a few questions on the subject, as Susan's principal employment was to wait upon her and Rose, and, therefore, she must know more about her than any one else. Miss Morton spoke so kindly, and took such an interest in the poor orphan girl, that it was impossible not to be at ease when talking on this one thing at least ; and Amy's heart was at length completely won, when she met Susan one afternoon on the stairs leading to Miss Morton's room, which was in a little turret close to the schoolroom ; and on inquiring what made her look so much more cheerful than usual, found that Emily had made her a present of a new book, and had promised, if possible, to hear her read three times a week.

'She is so good to me, Miss Herbert,' said Susan ; 'it almost makes me happy.'

'Oh ! but, Susan,' said Amy ; 'I wish you could be quite happy. I thought you would when you came here, and had such a comfortable home.'

'It is not my home, Miss,' replied Susan ; 'grandmother's cottage is my home now.'

'And do you want to go back there ?' asked Amy, looking very disappointed.

'Oh no ! Miss, I should only be a burden, and I know it would not be right ; but I should like very much to see her and the children.'

'But would you rather live there ?' repeated Amy.

'I would rather live with my friends anywhere, Miss, than amongst strangers.'

Poor Amy felt heartily vexed. 'But you know, Susan,' she said, 'you could not expect to have such nice dinners with your grandmother, or such a comfortable bed, or to wear such good clothes, as you do here.'

‘Ah! Miss, but it is not the eating and drinking, and the clothes, that make one happy,’ replied Susan.

At this moment Margaret called her cousin to the schoolroom, and the conversation was interrupted; but Amy could not help thinking of it afterwards, and talking of it to her mamma when she went home.

‘It seems very strange, mamma,’ she said, ‘that Susan should care so little for having such a comfortable place to live in.’

‘Should you be happy, Amy, at Emmerton, without me?’

‘Oh no! mamma, never; but then——’

‘But what, my dear child?’

‘I am afraid it is wrong, mamma; but I think sometimes that it would be very nice to have a carriage and servants, and a large house; and it must be almost as great a change to Susan to have so many comforts as she has now.’

‘The reason why you think so differently, my love, is, that you have never known yet what real unhappiness means. When that time comes, you will feel with Susan, that all such things are of no consequence. I believe God often sends afflictions to teach us this.’

‘And do you think He will send them to me, mamma?’ said Amy, anxiously.

‘I believe He will send you whatever is necessary to make you good, my dear, and will give you strength to bear it; but it will be better and happier for you if you endeavour to overcome this longing for riches and grandeur now, and so, perhaps, the trial may not be required.’

Amy did not quite understand all that her mother meant, or why she should look so sad; but she went to rest that night with a heavier heart than usual, even though she had made it an especial part of her evening prayers that God would grant her a humble spirit, and teach her not to desire anything beyond what He had given; and when she next went to Emmerton she looked upon Susan as much better than herself, and took even a greater interest in her; and finding that Miss Morton did the same, and studied in many little ways to make the poor girl feel less friendless and lonely, it seemed as if the barrier between herself and Emily was in a measure done away; and she began from this time to experience a pleasure in being with her, which once she would have imagined impossible.

CHAPTER VIII.

‘MAMMA,’ said Amy, as she returned from Emmerton one bright afternoon in the beginning of September, ‘Aunt Harrington hopes that when I go to the Hall on Thursday, you will go with me ; for Lord Rochford is coming over with Miss Cunningham, and she thinks you would like to see them. The carriage will be sent for you whenever you wish it.’

‘Has not Miss Cunningham been at the Hall before?’ asked Mrs Herbert.

‘No,’ replied Amy ; ‘she was to have gone there just after my aunt came, but one of her uncles was taken ill and died, and then she went away somewhere on a visit. I want to see her very much, for I am sure my aunt is very anxious that Dora should be with her a great deal.’

‘How did you guess that?’ asked Mrs Herbert.

‘Oh, by the way in which she talked of her, and said she hoped Dora would make herself agreeable, and that there were very few young people of the same age here, and that the acquaintance was very desirable. But, mamma,’ continued Amy, looking up archly in her mother’s face, ‘I think Dora is determined not to like her.’

‘And why should you think so?’

‘Because I am sure Dora never does like any one she is told to like. She always has a fancy for things which no one else can endure, and she will pet that ugly tabby cat which you saw in the schoolroom the other day, and that great fierce dog which growls whenever any one goes near it, though I think she is a little afraid of it.’

‘And does her love for human beings go by contraries too?’

‘I don’t know quite, because I have never seen her with strangers,’ said Amy ; ‘but I am sure it is her way in other things, for even in her dress I can see it. She generally chooses to wear whatever Margaret or I think ugly. But, mamma, have you ever seen Miss Cunningham, and do you think I shall like her?’

‘I saw her frequently when she was a very little child,’ replied Mrs Herbert ; ‘for before your uncle went to Wayland, Lady Rochford was very intimate with your aunt ; but after that she became ill, and I had no carriage, and the distance between us

is so great, that we have very seldom met, though I have been asked occasionally to stay there; and once, when your dear papa was here, I went.'

'Then you will like to go with me on Thursday, mamma,' said Amy; 'you know it will make me so happy, and you never go now, as you used to do in the summer. You always say it is such a fatigue; but I did so enjoy the nice long days, when you were with me.'

'I must wait till Thursday comes before I decide,' answered her mother. 'The postman shall take a note for me to Emmerton early, to say whether we shall want the carriage.'

Amy watched her mamma more anxiously than usual the next day, and was not quite satisfied with her pale and languid looks; and when she appeared at breakfast the following morning, evidently suffering from the effects of a sleepless night, it was clear that she was more fit to stay at home than to spend the day at Emmerton; and, much to Amy's disappointment, the donkey was ordered at eleven o'clock, and she was obliged to set off for her ride by herself.

There were preparations in the schoolroom for a day of idleness. Rose was playing with her doll, Margaret engaged with some fancy work for herself, and Dora deep in the contents of an amusing book, while Miss Morton, relieved from her usual duties, had gone to her own room to enjoy quietness and solitude.

'I don't think I like coming here on a holiday,' observed Amy, when she entered the room; 'it does not seem natural.'

'I like it, though,' said Rose, as she tied a pink ribbon round her doll's waist, in a firm, hard knot, and then held it up to be admired. 'I never have my doll's new frock except on holidays; and Emily is coming presently to have a good game of play.'

'You won't play here,' exclaimed Margaret, sharply; 'we can have no litter made.'

'I don't want to make a litter,' said Rose; 'and I had much rather go and play in Emily's room; she is never cross.'

'O Rose!' said a gentle voice behind her; and Rose was immediately sensible that she had been wrong; and turning round to Emily, who had just come into the room, she jumped upon a chair to kiss her, and whispered, 'I won't be naughty; but no one is kind except you.'

'You must not speak so,' replied Emily; 'and your sister is

quite right in saying it will not do to make a litter here ; but there is plenty of space in my bedroom, and we will go there and play when I have just spoken to your cousin.'

'And won't Amy come too ?' said Rose.

Amy looked half inclined ; but Margaret vehemently asserted that such a thing had never been heard of before ; and Dora raised her head from her book, begging more earnestly than was her wont that Amy would stay with them ; and so Miss Morton and Rose departed with the doll and her treasures, and Amy remained to while away the time as she best could till Miss Cunningham arrived. Not that this was a difficult task, for there were many books at hand which were quite new to her ; and she was so unwearied a reader, that, although her cousins did not take the least trouble to entertain her, the time seemed very short till the sound of carriage wheels and the loud ringing of the door-bell announced the arrival of a visitor. Margaret hastily gathered up her fragments of silk and beads, and thrust them into the first open drawer she could find (a proceeding which Amy did not fail to remark, as she knew that the task of finding Margaret's missing treasures always devolved upon her) ; but Dora did not appear to observe what was passing till her sister stealthily opened the door and peeped into the passage, and then she called out to her to shut it, and wondered she was not ashamed of being so unladylike. Margaret was not at all inclined to obey, and a dispute would probably have been the consequence but for the entrance of the footman, who came with Mrs Harrington's orders that the young ladies should go immediately to the drawing-room. Margaret ran to the glass to arrange her curls ; and Dora, lingering over her book, reluctantly prepared to do as she was told, always a difficult task with her, and particularly so at that moment.

'I suppose my aunt wishes me to go, too?' said Amy.

'My mistress only mentioned Miss Harrington and Miss Margaret,' replied the man, very respectfully but decidedly ; for he well knew that Mrs Harrington always required her commands to be taken literally.

Amy shrunk back, vexed with herself for having offered to go, and more vexed with her aunt for having omitted to send for her. It would have made her feel shy to be obliged to encounter strangers ; but it was not pleasant to be left behind.

'Never mind, dear,' said Dora, kindly, seeing her blank face of disappointment ; 'we shall be back again presently, and then

you shall see Miss Cunningham ; but I tell you she is just like the rest of the world.'

'I don't know why I should care,' replied Amy, recovering herself ; 'it will be much more agreeable to stay here and read, for I am not used to strangers as you are, Dora.'

And yet, though it was more agreeable, Amy was not contented ; and when Margaret, having arranged her longest ringlet to her satisfaction, and set her dress to rights, and drawn up her head so as to show off her long neck to advantage, pronounced herself quite ready, and left Amy to the quiet enjoyment of her book, she could not manage to fix her attention upon it. For the first time since her uncle's arrival at Emmerton she felt neglected ; it had often happened before that Dora or Margaret had been sent for on some little business with their mamma, but then it did not signify ; and the few visitors who called seldom inquired for them ; or, if they saw them accidentally, there was always as much notice taken of Amy as of her cousins, so that she had not fancied there could be any distinction between them ; and even now she hardly acknowledged to herself the cause of her uncomfortable feelings, but sat with the open book before her, trying to find out why her aunt had wished her to be left behind ; and then looking at the loveliness of the grounds, and the signs of wealth and luxury in the room, and contrasting them with the plainly-furnished drawing-room and the little garden at the cottage, 'I should be very happy if mamma had such beautiful things,' was the thought that arose in her mind, but there was something within that checked it. They only who have tried earnestly to do right can tell how quickly conscience whispers when we are wrong ; and Amy, young as she was, had too often heard her mother's warnings against envy and covetousness, not to be aware that she was at that moment tempted by them ; and half-repeating to herself, 'how wrong it is in me !' she turned to her book with the resolution of not thinking anything more about the matter. She had read but a few pages when the sound of voices in the passage interrupted her. Dora's constrained tone, and Margaret's affected laugh, told directly there was a stranger with them, and immediately afterwards they entered with Miss Cunningham, and the first glance showed Amy that Dora's description had been very correct. She was neither tall nor short, neither stout nor thin ; she had grayish blue eyes, without any particular expression in them ; sandy-coloured hair, a fair, freckled complexion, and

rather pretty mouth, and certainly was very unlike what Amy had fancied in all but her dress, which was peculiarly handsome.

‘This is our schoolroom,’ said Dora, when Miss Cunningham, upon being told who Amy was, had shaken hands with her, and scanned her from head to foot.

‘Is it?’ was the reply. ‘It is a nice little place; I think it must be just the size of my governess’s sitting-room.’

‘It does very well,’ said Dora; ‘but it is nothing like the room we had to ourselves at Wayland, which was twice as large.’

‘My governess’s room,’ continued Miss Cunningham, ‘used to be my nursery; and then, when I grew too old for it, of course papa gave up another to me; in fact, I have two I may call my own now—a little room where I keep all my books, and a large one where I do my lessons.’

‘There was a whole set of rooms which was to have been ours,’ said Dora, ‘if we had remained at Wayland; and here, I suppose, something of the kind will be arranged for us soon, but everything is so unsettled yet that papa has not had time to think about it.’

‘My little room,’ observed Miss Cunningham, ‘looks out upon the finest view in the whole estate. I can see a distance of twenty miles from the window.’

‘The tower on Thorwood Hill was thirty miles off, I think, Margaret,’ said Dora, turning to her sister.

‘Yes,’ she replied; ‘but then it could only be seen as a little speck on a clear day.’

Miss Cunningham went to the window. ‘You have no view here,’ she said.

‘No,’ answered Dora; ‘it is much pleasanter having it shut in in this way, because it makes it so private.’

‘But when a house stands high, it is very easy to be private, and yet to have beautiful views between the trees.’

‘I suppose,’ said Dora, ‘that when this house was built, several hundred years ago, people did not think so much about scenery, though, indeed, there is a very nice view from the front. I have heard papa say that it is only modern places which stand high. Rochford Park, I think, is about fifty years old.’

‘Only the new part; there is one wing which is much older.’

‘But the new part was built when your family first went there, was it not?’

‘Yes ; it was built by my grandfather, when he returned from being ambassador to Turkey.’

‘I think the newest part of Emmerton has been built at least a hundred and fifty years,’ said Dora ; ‘and the old part—I really cannot say exactly what the age of it is ; but the first baron who is buried in the chapel died somewhere about 1470, and his was the elder branch of our family.’

‘But there is no title in your family now,’ observed Miss Cunningham.

‘Indeed there is,’ replied Dora ; ‘Lord Doringford is a cousin of ours.’

‘Oh ! a hundredth cousin, I suppose. Any one may be that ; for you know we are all descended from Adam.’

‘Yes ; and of course, that is the reason why people think so much more of a family being an old one, than of a mere title.’

Miss Cunningham turned sharply round to Amy.

‘Do you live here ?’ she asked ; and at being addressed so unceremoniously, Amy’s colour rose, but she tried to answer gently, though she felt a little unwilling to acknowledge that her home was neither a park nor a hall.

‘I live about two miles off,’ she said, ‘at Emmerton Cottage ; but I am here a great deal.’

‘Oh !’ was all the reply ; and Amy took up a book, and wished the new visitor had remained at Rochford Park.

‘Is not that a very pretty drawing ?’ said Margaret, finding Dora unwilling to speak again, and feeling very awkward. It was a drawing of Miss Morton’s, which she was going to copy.

‘Very,’ replied Miss Cunningham, shortly. ‘My style is flowers ; I learned when I was in Paris, and——’

‘But that does not make this drawing pretty or ugly, does it ?’ interrupted Dora, with a curl of the lip which portended a storm.

Miss Cunningham stared at her, and then went on with her sentence : ‘And my master told papa that my copies were almost equal to the original.’

‘I should like to see them very much,’ said Margaret, wishing as usual to conciliate her last acquaintance. ‘Will you bring them over to show us some day ?’

Dora held up a lovely rose, almost the last of the season. ‘Look,’ she said ; ‘who would not rather have that than the most beautiful drawing that ever could be made of it ?’

No notice was taken of the question ; for by this time Miss

Cunningham felt that she was no match for Dora in anything but pretension; and her only resource was indifference. She therefore went on talking to Margaret, who proved herself a willing listener. Drawings, music, lessons, dress, all were mentioned in turn; and Margaret patiently bore the perpetual repetition of 'I think this,' and 'I do that,' as she looked at Miss Cunningham's sandy hair and freckled complexion, and felt that in one thing, at least, there could be no comparison between them. Amy for some time stood by, one moment casting a wistful look at her book, and wishing that it were not rude to read, or that she might carry it off to Miss Morton's room, and the next feeling a strong inclination to laugh, as she listened to what was passing. She had never heard anything of the kind before; for Dora did not boast except when she wished to rival some one, and Amy was far too humble to enter into competition with her in anything.

At length, even the delightful subject of self seemed to be exhausted. The visitor paused; and Margaret looking at the time-piece, and remarking that it wanted nearly an hour to dinner, proposed that they should go into the garden.

'Is there anything to be seen there?' asked Miss Cunningham.

'Nothing that *you* will admire,' replied Dora, sarcastically.

But the emphasis on the *you* was quite lost. From her childhood, Miss Cunningham could never be made to understand what was not expressed in plain words.

'I suppose,' she said, rather condescendingly, 'you think we have such a beautiful place at the Park, that I shall not care about this.'

'Oh no!' answered Dora, 'such an idea never entered my head; for it struck me when I was there the other day, that it was so like all the other gentlemen's seats I have ever seen, that you would be quite glad to look at something different. There is hardly such another place as Emmerton, I believe, in England.'

The meaning of this was certainly quite evident, but Miss Cunningham was not quick at a retort; she could only stare, as she usually did when she had not words at command, and ask Margaret to show her the way into the garden. Dora begged to be excused accompanying them, and Amy would willingly have done the same, but for the fear of appearing rude; and even in such trifles she had learned already to consult the feelings of others.

The morning was so lovely, uniting almost the warmth of summer with the freshness of autumn, that the mere sensation of being in the open air was enjoyable; and it was fortunate for Amy that it was so, as neither of her companions paid any attention to her. Margaret led the way through the winding walks in the shrubbery, and along the terrace, and by the side of the lake; pointing out the different objects which were to be seen, expressing herself extremely delighted at having Miss Cunningham with her, and hoping that they should meet very often, for really there were no people living near Emmerton, and it was dreadfully dull after Wayland; forgetting that only the day before, in one of her fits of extreme affection, she had told Amy they did not regret Wayland in the least, for that being with her made up for everything. Amy, however, did not forget; and it made her doubt, as she had often been inclined to do before, whether her cousin was not sometimes insincere. It was quite possible that Margaret might find Emmerton dull, and there was no harm in her saying so, but there was no occasion to make kind speeches if she did not mean them; and almost involuntarily she turned away, and walked a few paces behind by herself. Miss Cunningham looked at everything that was pointed out, and once or twice said it was pretty; but the chief charm of all consisted in its being like something else which was more beautiful at Rochford Park. The trees were taller, the lake was clearer, the walks were broader, and Amy, as she listened, sometimes forgot her annoyance in amusement, though Margaret's words continually reminded her of it again; and by the time they had gone over the pleasure-grounds, she thought that her society would not have been missed if she had remained in the house. Suddenly, however, as they seated themselves on a bench by the side of the lake, Margaret seemed to recollect that her cousin was present; and, with a half-suppressed yawn, asked her if she could think of anything else they could do before dinner. It was evident that she was tired of her company, and Amy ransacked her brain to discover something else which might be seen.

‘I think we have gone over everything except the chapel,’ she said.

‘Oh yes! the chapel,’ exclaimed Margaret, ‘that will just do. I am sure Miss Cunningham would like to see it.’

‘I don’t know, indeed,’ was the reply. ‘Is it far? I am dreadfully tired.’

'It is a part of the house,' said Amy, 'and you know we must get home. This is the shortest way to it, Margaret,' she continued, pointing to a dark overgrown walk; 'you know it leads over the wooden bridge to the private garden, without our being obliged to go to the front of the house.'

'The shortest way is the best,' muttered Miss Cunningham; 'I hate being walked to death.'

Amy thought it would have been more civil to have kept her remarks to herself; but she supposed the observation was not intended to be heard, and they went on, Miss Cunningham complaining the whole way either of the narrowness of the path, or the inconvenience of the briars, or the heat of the sun, and making both Margaret and Amy very much repent having her with them.

The walk, however, did at last come to an end; and as they turned a sharp angle of the building, and came suddenly upon the chapel, with its gray buttresses half covered with ivy, standing out upon a smooth square of velvet turf, and concealed from the pleasure-ground by a thick shrubbery and one or two splendid chestnut trees, Amy forgot how unlike her companions were to herself, and involuntarily exclaimed, 'Is it not beautiful!'

'How odd!' said Miss Cunningham; 'why, it is a church.'

'It is very gloomy,' observed Margaret; 'I don't often come here.'

'Not gloomy,' said Amy, 'only grave.'

'Well! grave or gloomy, it is all the same. I wish, Amy, you would learn not to take up one's words so. And now we are come here, I don't think we can get in. You should have remembered that this door is always locked; do run into the house, and ask Bridget for the key, and we will wait here.'

Amy instantly did as she was desired, but had not gone ten yards before she returned. 'You know, Margaret,' she said, 'that I cannot see Bridget, because I must not go amongst the servants. I never have been since the first night you came, when my aunt was so angry with me.'

'But,' replied Margaret, 'mamma is engaged with Lord Rochford now; you will be sure not to meet her.'

'It is not the meeting her, but the doing what she would not like, that I am afraid of; but it will do, perhaps, if I ring the bell in the schoolroom, and then I can ask for it.'

'Yes; only run off and be quick, for we have not much time to spare.'

And in a moment Amy disappeared ; and with the best speed she could make, found her way to the schoolroom, and seizing the bell-rope, without remembering how easily it rang, gave it such a pull that the sound was heard through the whole house. The last tone had but just died away when another was heard, to Amy's ear much more awful. It was her aunt's harsh voice in the passage, exclaiming against such a noise being made, and declaring that Dora or Margaret, whichever it was, should be severely reprimanded. Poor Amy actually trembled, and stood with the bell-rope in her hand, unable to move, when Mrs Harrington entered.

'What, Amy ! Amy Herbert ! A most extraordinary liberty, I must say ! I must beg you to recollect that you are not at home. Pray, did any one give you permission to ring ?'

Amy could hardly say 'yes,' because it was her own proposition ; but she stammered out 'that Margaret wanted the key of the chapel, and she did not like to go amongst the servants, for fear of displeasing her aunt.'

'Then Margaret should have come herself to ask for what she wants ; I will have no one but my own family ringing the bell and giving orders in my house. And such a noise !' continued Mrs Harrington, her anger increasing as she remembered how her nerves had been affected by the loud peal.

Amy could only look humble and distressed ; and, forgetting the key and everything but her desire to escape from her aunt, she moved as quickly towards the door as she dared. But she had scarcely reached it when a second fright awaited her—a grasp, which seemed almost like that of a giant, stopped her, and the quick, good-humoured voice of a stranger exclaimed, 'Why, what's the matter ? Who have we got here—a third daughter, Mrs Harrington ?'

Amy ventured to look in the face of the speaker, and felt reassured by the kind, open countenance that met her view. She guessed in an instant it must be Lord Rochford.

'Not a daughter,' replied Mrs Harrington, in a constrained voice ; 'Mr Harrington's niece, Amy Herbert.'

'Ah ! well,' said Lord Rochford, 'it is very nearly a daughter, though. Then this must be the child of my friend Harrington's second sister, Ellen. I could almost have guessed it from the likeness ; those black eyes are the very image of her mother's. And what has become of the colonel ? any news of him lately ?'

Mrs Harrington shook her head.

‘Sad, sad, very sad,’ muttered Lord Rochford to himself; ‘and the mother, too, so ill, I hear.’ Then, seeing a tear glistening in Amy’s eye, he paused, patted her kindly on the shoulder, and told her he was sure she was a great pet at home, and he should be glad to see her at Rochford Park; ‘and Lucy will like to see you, too,’ he continued. ‘She never meets any one but grown-up people from year’s end to year’s end. By the by, Mrs Harrington, I dare say Mrs Herbert would be very willing to enter into the plan you and I were talking of just now. I wish some day you would mention it.’

‘You forget,’ replied Mrs Harrington, trying to look gracious, ‘that I said it was quite out of the question at present.’

‘Oh no! not at all. But, begging your pardon, I never knew a lady yet who was not willing to change her mind when she had a fair excuse given her.’

‘You may not have met with any one before,’ said Mrs Harrington, in her haughtiest manner, ‘but I must assure you, you have met with one now.—What do you want?’ she added, for the first time perceiving the footman, who had answered the bell. ‘Amy, you rang; Jolliffe waits for your orders.’

Amy’s neck and cheeks in an instant became crimson; but she managed to say, though in a voice scarcely audible, that she wanted the key of the chapel.

‘Tell Bridget to send it instantly,’ said Mrs Harrington; and she did not notice Amy again till the key was brought, when, putting it into her hands without a word, she motioned her to the door. And Amy, enchanted at having at last escaped, returned to her cousin even more quickly than she had left her. ‘O Margaret!’ was her exclamation, as she ran up, holding the key in her hand, ‘here it is; but I have got into a dreadful scrape by ringing the bell, and I don’t know what I shall do; my aunt will never forgive me.’

‘Nonsense,’ replied Margaret, in a really kind manner; ‘it is only just for the moment; mamma will soon forget it. You have nothing to do but to keep out of her way for some time.’

‘I am sure she won’t,’ replied Amy; ‘she looked so angry, and called me Amy Herbert.’

‘But your name is Herbert, is it not?’ said Miss Cunningham, with a stare.

‘Don’t you know what Amy means?’ asked Margaret, laughing; ‘people never tack on surnames to Christian names till they are so angry they don’t know what else to do. But don’t make

yourself unhappy, Amy ; I know mamma better than you do ; she soon forgets—just let me know what she said.’

The story was soon told, and Amy’s mind considerably eased by her cousin’s assurance that she had got into a hundred such scrapes in her life ; though there still remained such a recollection of her alarm, that even the quiet beauty of the chapel could not entirely soothe her. Miss Cunningham looked round with curiosity, but with a total want of interest ; and Margaret laughed, and said it was a gloomy old place, and then called to her companions to observe the strange little figures which were carved on an ancient monument near the altar, declaring they were the most absurd things she had ever seen. But she could only induce Miss Cunningham to join in the merriment ; Amy just smiled, and said, in rather a subdued voice, that they were odd, and she had often wondered at them before.

‘What is the matter, Amy ?’ asked Margaret. ‘Why don’t you speak out ; and why are you so grave !’

‘I don’t quite know,’ answered Amy, trying to raise her voice ; ‘but I never can laugh or speak loud in a church.’

‘And why not ?’ said Miss Cunningham, who had been patting one of the figures with her parasol, and calling it a ‘little wretch.’

‘Because,’ replied Amy, ‘it is a place where people come to say their prayers and read their Bibles.’

‘Well ! and so they say their prayers and read their Bibles in their bedrooms,’ observed Margaret ; ‘and yet you would not mind laughing there.’

Amy thought for a moment, and then said, ‘You know bedrooms are never consecrated.’

‘Consecrated !’ repeated Miss Cunningham, her eyes opening to their fullest extent ; ‘What has that to do with it ?’

‘I don’t know that I can quite tell,’ replied Amy ; ‘but I believe it means making places like Sundays.’

‘I wish you would talk sense,’ said Miss Cunningham, sharply ; ‘I can’t understand a word you say.’

‘I know what I mean myself, though I cannot explain it. On Sunday people never work, or ride about, or read the same books as they do on other days—at least mamma never lets me do it ; and she makes me say my Catechism, and other things like it—hymns, I mean, and collects.’

‘That may be your fashion on a Sunday, but it is not mine,’ said Miss Cunningham. ‘I used to say my Catechism once a

month before I was confirmed, to get it perfect ; but since then I have never thought about it.'

'Have you been confirmed?' asked Margaret and Amy, in one breath.

'Yes, to be sure. I am quite old enough ; I was fifteen last month.'

'Then you must feel quite grown up now,' said Amy.

'Grown up ! why should I ? I shall not do that till I come out in London.'

'Shall you not ?' said Amy, gravely. 'I think I should feel quite grown up if I were confirmed.'

'I never heard any one yet call a girl only just fifteen grown up,' observed Margaret.

'It is not what I should be called, but what I should feel,' replied Amy. 'People, when they are confirmed, are allowed to do things that they must not before.' And as she said this, she walked away, as if afraid of being obliged to explain herself more, and went to the lower end of the chapel to look at her favourite monument of the first baron of Emmerton.

'I never knew any one with such odd notions as Amy,' said Margaret, when her cousin was gone. 'I never can make out how old she is. Sometimes she seems so much younger than we are, and then again she gets into a grave mood, and talks just as if she were twenty.'

'But it is very easy to ask her her age, is it not ?' asked the matter-of-fact Miss Cunningham.

'Do you always think persons just the age they call themselves ?' said Margaret, laughing.

'Yes, of course, I do, every one, that is except one of my aunts, who always tells me she is seven-and-twenty, when mamma knows she is five-and-thirty.'

'What I mean,' said Margaret, 'is, that all persons appear different at different times.'

'They don't to me,' answered Miss Cunningham, shortly. 'If I am told a girl is fourteen, I believe her to be fourteen ; and if I am told she is twelve, I believe she is twelve. Your cousin is twelve, is she not ?'

Margaret saw it was useless to discuss the subject any more ; and, calling to Amy that they should be late for dinner if they stayed any longer, hastened out of the chapel. Amy lingered behind, with the uncomfortable feeling of having something disagreeable associated with a place which once had brought before

her nothing but what was delightful. Margaret and Miss Cunningham had seemed perfectly indifferent to what she thought so solemn ; and although quite aware that their carelessness did not at all take away from the real sacredness of the chapel, yet it was something new and startling to find that it was possible for persons to enter a place peculiarly dedicated to the service of God without any greater awe than they would have felt in their own homes.

If Amy had lived longer and seen more of the world, she would have known that, unhappily, such thoughtlessness is so common as not to be remarkable ; but she had passed her life with those who thought very differently ; and the first appearance of irreverence was as painful as it was unexpected.

CHAPTER IX.

THE thought of being probably obliged again to meet Mrs Harrington, soon made Amy forget her painful feelings in the chapel ; and during the whole of dinner her eye turned anxiously to the door, and her ear caught every sound in the passage, in the dread lest her aunt should enter ; and she ate what was placed before her almost unconsciously, without attending to anything that was said.

Miss Morton was the only person who remarked this ; and she had a sufficient opportunity, for no notice was taken of her. She was not introduced to Miss Cunningham ; but the young lady cast many curious glances at her as she came into the room, and then a whispered conversation followed between her and Margaret, quite loud enough to be heard. She was described as ‘the person who teaches us music and drawing,’ and her birth, parentage, and education were given. And when Miss Cunningham’s curiosity was satisfied, she condescended to look at her attentively for nearly a minute, and then appeared entirely to forget that such a being was in existence. Miss Morton bore this gaze without shrinking. There was not a flush on her delicate cheek, or the slightest curl of anger about her gentle mouth ; and all that showed she was aware of what was said was the momentary glistening of her eye as she caught the words—‘Oh ! she is an orphan, is she?’ and then Margaret’s reply—‘Yes ; she lost her

father and mother both in one month.' Amy would have felt very indignant, if she had remarked it, but at that moment she could attend to nothing but the door; and Dora, whose proud, sulky mood had not yet passed away, sat by the window, and did not speak.

The dinner was very dull. Miss Cunningham professed herself so tired with her walk that she could not eat; and looking at everything that was offered her, said 'she would try it, but really she had such a delicate appetite she could seldom touch anything;' helping herself, at the same time, to two very good-sized cutlets as a commencement, and finishing with the last piece of apple-tart in the dish near her. Rose fixed her eyes steadily upon her, as she transferred the remains of the tart to her plate; and then turning to Miss Morton, whose seat was always next to hers, said almost aloud, 'Why does she not ask first!' Miss Morton looked as grave as she could, and tried to stop her; but although Miss Cunningham heard, it did not at all follow that she understood; and the child's question had no more effect upon her than if it had been put in private.

'Would you let me go with you to your room?' said Amy to Miss Morton, as soon as dinner was over. 'I am afraid aunt Harrington will be here presently; and I have got into such a scrape with her.'

'But supposing,' replied Emily, 'that I should think it best for you to stay, what will you do then?'

'Oh! of course,' said Amy, 'I should do as you thought right; but if you would let me go and tell you all about it, I should be so glad; and I will promise to come back again if you say I ought.'

'Well!' replied Emily, 'if we make that agreement I shall not care; and we will let Rose and her doll stay behind.'

Miss Morton's room was becoming to Amy's feelings almost as delightful as the chapel. It was not often that she was admitted there, but whenever she was, her curiosity and interest were greatly excited. There were, in fact, two rooms, a small ante-room and a rather large bedroom; and they would probably have been considered too good to be appropriated to Miss Morton's use, if it had not been that Rose always shared the same apartment. Emily's taste was so good, that wherever she went, some traces of it appeared; and when Amy first saw these rooms after her uncle's arrival, she scarcely recognised them to be the same which she had before known only as

desolate lumber-rooms. Not that there were any symptoms of luxury about them, for there was no furniture beyond what was absolutely required ; but there were books and work on the table, pictures on the walls, and flowers in the windows ; and to all these Amy guessed some history was attached, for the pictures she had been told were of Emily's friends and relations, and the books had been given her by those she was now parted from, perhaps for ever in this world ; and the flowers seemed to possess a value beyond anything they could derive from their own beauty, for they were cherished almost as living beings. Once or twice lately Miss Morton had related to Amy some of the stories relating to these things, and this naturally increased her desire to hear more ; but on the present occasion she thought of nothing but the relief of escaping from her aunt ; and telling Emily, in a few words, what had occurred, she begged not to be sent back again.

Miss Morton thought for a moment, and then replied, 'I am afraid, my dear, that I must be very hard-hearted and say, no. Mrs Harrington is much more likely to be displeased, if she thinks you have hidden yourself. You know you must see her again, and then you will still have the same fear, and you will not be comfortable even at home, unless the meeting is over, but if you face it now, and tell her, if she should say anything, that you are sorry she has been displeased, and ask her to forgive you, you will return home happy. We never lessen our difficulties by putting off the evil day.'

'But,' replied Amy, 'Margaret says she will forget.'

'I think your cousin is wrong,' answered Miss Morton. 'Some things Mrs Harrington does forget, but not what she considers liberties ; besides, is it not much better to have our faults forgiven and forgotten ?'

'But I don't think I did anything wrong,' said Amy.

'No,' replied Miss Morton, 'it was not wrong in itself ; it was only wrong because it was against your aunt's wishes. She is very particular indeed about some things ; and this, of ringing the bell and giving orders, is one.'

'I can't say I am sorry if I am not,' said Amy ; 'and if I have not done anything wrong, how can I be so ?'

'You may be sorry for having vexed your aunt, though it was unintentionally ; and this is all I wish you to say.'

Amy looked very unhappy. 'I wish I had not gone away,' she said ; 'it will be much worse going back again if she is there.'

‘Yes,’ replied Miss Morton, ‘I can quite understand that; but whether it be easy or difficult it does not make any difference in its being right; and I think,’ she added, as she put her arm affectionately round Amy’s waist and kissed her for the first time, ‘I think there is some one you love very dearly who would say the same.’

Perhaps no kiss that Amy had ever before received had been so valuable as this. At the moment it seemed as if she had power to do anything that Miss Morton thought right, and she walked to the door with a firm step. Then once more her resolution failed, and as she stood with the handle in her hand she said, ‘Do you think my aunt will be there?’

‘I do not think about it,’ replied Miss Morton; ‘but if you delay, your courage will be quite gone. You will not shrink from doing what is right, will you?’

Amy waited no longer, but with a desperate effort ran down the turret stairs and along the passage, and opened the school-room door without giving herself time to remember what she was about to encounter.

The dessert still remained, but Dora and Margaret were standing at the round table in the oriel window, exhibiting their drawings to Lord Rochford, and Mr and Mrs Harrington were talking together apart. Amy’s first impulse was to screen herself from sight; but she remembered Miss Morton’s words, and resolving to meet the trial, at once walked up to the table.

‘Ah!’ said Lord Rochford, as he perceived her, ‘here is my little runaway friend, whom I have been looking for for some minutes. I am sure there must be some drawings of hers to be seen too.’

Mrs Harrington turned round. ‘Get your drawings, Amy,’ she said in her coldest manner. Amy willingly obeyed, thinking anything preferable to standing still and doing nothing.

‘Very pretty, very pretty, indeed!’ exclaimed Lord Rochford, looking at them; ‘artist-like decidedly; very good that is.’ And he pointed to one which Amy knew was the worst of all, and which only struck his eye because the shadows were darker and the lights brighter than the rest.

‘Has Amy been doing anything wrong?’ said Mr Harrington, in a low voice to his wife. ‘She seems so frightened, yet she always strikes me as being very obedient; and those drawings of hers are admirable.’

‘She would do very well,’ answered Mrs Harrington, ‘if she

would but be as attentive to her general conduct as she is to her accomplishments.'

'Oh! careless, I suppose,' said Mr Harrington. 'It is not to be wondered at in such a young thing.'

'I can never think any age an excuse for an impertinent liberty,' was her reply.

'Amy impertinent! it is quite impossible. Come here, my dear, and tell me what you have been doing.'

A cloud gathered on Mrs Harrington's brow; but Amy felt reassured by her uncle's kind manner, and answered as audibly as she could, 'I rang the bell, uncle.'

Mr Harrington laughed heartily, and Mrs Harrington looked still more annoyed.

'This is not the place to talk about it,' she said, quickly. 'Amy knows very well that I had full reason to be displeased, but of course she is too proud to own it.'

'Oh no, indeed I am not!' exclaimed Amy. 'I did not know I was wrong, aunt; but I am very sorry for having vexed you.'

'There,' said Mr Harrington, 'you cannot wish for anything more; she is very sorry, and will not do it again. And now, Charlotte, you must be very sorry and forgive.'

Amy felt as if she hardly liked to be forgiven, when she did not think she was in fault; but again she recollected what Miss Morton had said,—that she was to be sorry, not for having been guilty of a fault, but for having annoyed her aunt; and she checked the feeling of pride, and listened patiently and humbly, while Mrs Harrington gave her a tolerably long lecture on the impropriety of taking the same liberties at Emmerton that she would at the cottage, and ended by saying that she hoped, as she grew older, she would know her position better. After which, bestowing upon her a cold, unwilling kiss, she promised that she would try and forget what had passed.

Mr Harrington walked away as the lecture began; disliking so much being said before his visitor, who, he saw, observed what was going on.

Lord Rochford's pity had, indeed, been somewhat excited, and he said good-naturedly, as Amy came up to the table again—'Well! I hope it is right now. I suspected you were not in such a hurry for nothing; but "all's well that ends well," you know. I hate scrapes, and always did,—never let Lucy get into any, do I, darling?'

Miss Cunningham either did not hear, or did not think it worth while to answer; taking advantage of her father's principle that she was never to get into scrapes, she always treated him in the most unceremonious manner possible.

'I don't think you and Mrs Harrington would quite agree upon that subject,' observed Mr Harrington; 'her principle is that storms bring peace.'

'Not mine, not mine,' said Lord Rochford. 'There is nothing in the world that I love like peace; so now, Mrs Harrington, we will be of the same mind about your visit to the Park. You shall come next week, and bring all the young ones, my little friend here included.'

'You must excuse my deciding immediately,' replied Mrs Harrington; 'and I have great doubts whether going about and seeing people is at all good for my niece; even being here upsets her mind.'

Poor Amy looked very blank, for it had long been one of her chief wishes to see Rochford Park.

'You must not be out of temper about it,' said Mrs Harrington, as she remarked her disappointed countenance; 'only try and be more attentive, and then you will be sure to be rewarded.'

'I shall not let you off, though, so easily,' continued Lord Rochford. 'I have set my heart upon your coming, and I must have you all; no exception for good temper or bad. Come, Harrington, interpose your authority.'

'I will promise to use my influence,' answered Mr Harrington; 'and with that you must be satisfied.'

Lord Rochford declared he was not at all, but that he had no time to argue the matter, for the carriage had been at the door at least a quarter of an hour, so he should consider the thing as settled.

The parting between Margaret and Miss Cunningham was very affectionate; and Amy, as she looked on, wondered how so much love could have been inspired in so short a time, and felt it quite a relief that Dora was contented with a cold shake of the hand, since it allowed her to follow her example without being particular. To have kissed Miss Cunningham would have been almost as disagreeable as to be kissed by her aunt when she was angry.

'That is the most unpleasant girl I ever saw,' exclaimed Dora, when she was left alone with Amy, Margaret having

followed Miss Cunningham to the carriage. 'A proud, conceited, forward thing, who thinks she may give herself any airs she pleases. Now, Amy, don't look grave; I know you can't endure her.'

'I don't like her,' said Amy.

'Not like her! You hate her, I am sure you do,—you must.'

'I hope not,' replied Amy, laughing. 'I never hated any one yet.'

'Then I am sorry for you,' said Dora. 'No one can be a good lover who is not a good hater. I would rather have any thing than lukewarmness.'

'So would I,' replied Amy. 'I hope I am not lukewarm; and I am sure I can love some people very dearly,—yes, more than I could ever tell,' she added, as she thought of her mamma. 'But I don't know whether I could hate; I never met with any one yet to try upon.'

'You can't have a better subject than that odious Miss Cunningham. I could not think of her sandy hair, and her ugly unmeaning eyes, for two minutes, without feeling that I hated her.'

'Please don't say so, Dora,' said Amy, earnestly, 'it makes me so sorry.'

'Does it? I don't see why you should care what I say; it can make no difference to you.'

'Oh yes, but indeed it does, for I think it is not right. I don't mean to vex you,' continued Amy, seeing the expression of her cousin's countenance change. 'I know you are older than I am, and perhaps I ought not to say it, only I could not help being sorry.'

'I am not vexed,' said Dora; 'but it cannot signify to you whether I am right or wrong. It would be different if it were yourself.'

'If it were myself,' replied Amy, 'I could be sorry for myself, and try not to do wrong any more; but I cannot make you sorry, and so it seems almost worse.'

'Make me sorry!' exclaimed Dora, in a tone of surprise. 'Of course you can't; but why should you wish it?'

'I always wish every one to be sorry when they do wrong, because, you know, no one is forgiven till they are.'

'But supposing they don't think it wrong, you would not have them be sorry then, would you? I see no harm in hating Miss Cunningham.'

'It may be wrong,' replied Amy, 'though you don't think so.'
'Who is to judge?' asked Dora.

Amy was silent for a moment, and then said. 'Would you let me show you a verse in the Bible, Dora, about it? Mamma made me read it one day when I said I hated some one, though I know I did not really do it, and I have never forgotten it.'

'Well, let me see it,' said Dora, almost sulkily. Amy took a Bible from the book-case, and pointed to the fifteenth verse of the third chapter of St John's first epistle :—'Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' 'Oh !' exclaimed Dora, when she had read it, 'that is so shocking. Of course, when I talk about hating, I don't mean such hatred as that.'

'So I said,' replied Amy ; 'and then mamma told me that if I did not mean it, I ought not to say it ; and that the very fact of my using such expressions showed that I had a great dislike, which I ought not to indulge ; and then she made me read a great many more verses in this epistle, about its being our duty to love people. But, Dora, I don't mean to teach you anything, for I am sure you must know it all a great deal better than I do ; only I wanted to tell you what mamma said to me.'

Amy would probably have been very much surprised if she had known the feelings which passed through her cousin's mind as she spoke. It had never entered her head that she could give advice or instruction ; and yet, perhaps, no words from an older person could have had half the effect of hers. Dora, however, was not in the habit of showing what she felt, and Amy was too simple to guess it, even when the exclamation escaped her, 'I would give all I am worth to have lived with Aunt Herbert and you all my life, Amy.'

'Oh no !' exclaimed Amy, 'you cannot be serious. Think of this house, and the beautiful grounds, and Wayland too, where you used to be so happy ; you never would bear to live in a cottage.'

'I think sometimes it makes no difference where people live,' answered Dora. 'I don't think I am at all happier for papa's having a fine house.'

Amy thought of what Susan Reynolds had said, 'that eating, and drinking, and fine clothes, did not make people happy ;' and it seemed strange that two persons so differently situated should have thought so much alike ; but she had not time to talk any longer to Dora, for the evening was closing in, and she was

obliged to return home, and, as she thought, without any attendant except the man servant who usually took charge of her. But just as she was settling herself upon her donkey, Bridget appeared at the hall door with a request that Miss Herbert would be so very kind as to wait one moment longer, for Stephen had been in just before, to know if any of the ladies were going back with her, for he wished very much to walk a little way if he might be allowed. 'He is only gone up to the stable, Miss,' added Bridget, 'if it is not too much trouble for you to stop. I can't think what made him go away.'

'Never mind,' said Amy, 'it is never any trouble to wait for Stephen; but it will not be long now—that must be he coming down the chestnut walk.'

Stephen's hobbling pace was exchanged for a species of trot, as he perceived Amy already mounted; and he came up to her with a thousand apologies for the delay. 'But you know, Miss Amy, 'tis not very often I can see you now, so I thought I would make bold for once. And please to tell me now how your mamma is, for she doesn't come here as she used; and the folks in the village say she's getting as white as a sheet.'

'I don't think mamma is as well or as strong as she used to be, Stephen,' replied Amy; 'but she does not complain much, only she soon gets tired.'

'Oh!' said Stephen, shaking his head, 'India, India,—'tis all India, Miss Amy. Why English people shouldn't be contented to stay on English ground is more than I can guess. A nice, comfortable cottage in a good pasture country, such as this, with a few ups and downs in it to make a variety, is all I should ever wish to have. I want nothing that's to be got from foreign parts; for it's always been my maxim that one penny in England is worth twenty out of it.'

'But,' replied Amy, 'some people are obliged to go, Stephen. I am sure papa would not have done it if he could have helped it.'

'Help or no help, 'tis what I can't understand,' said Stephen. 'Not that I mean any disrespect to the colonel, Miss Amy, but it grieves me to hear the people talk about your poor mamma's pale face.'

'I don't think she looks so very pale,' said Amy, feeling uncomfortable, and yet hardly owning it to herself.

'The dwellers in the same house are not those to see the change,' replied the old man; 'but I don't mean to be vexing

your young heart before its time. Sorrow comes soon enough to all ; and,' he added, reverently, 'He who sends it will send His strength with it.'

'That is what mamma says,' answered Amy. 'She is always begging me not to look forward ; but I do long to do it very often ; and she would be so happy if she could be sure when papa would come back.'

'Look, Miss Amy,' said Stephen, gathering a daisy from the grass, 'do you see that ? Now, you might try, and so might I, and so might all the great folks that ever lived,—we might all try all our lives, and we never could make such a thing as that ; and yet, you know, 'tis but a tiny flower that nobody thinks about ; and sometimes, when I get wishing that things were different, I take up a daisy and look at it, till it seems most wonderful how it should be made, and how it should live ; and then it comes into my head how many millions there are like it, and how many plants, and trees, and insects, and animals, and living souls too, and that God made them all,—all that are here, and all that are up above (for I suppose there is no harm in thinking that there may be such) ; and so at last, do you see, I don't only *know*, but I can *feel*, that He is wise ; and my heart gets quite light again, for I am sure that He knows what is best ; and as He has not told us what is to come, 'tis but folly to wish about it.'

'Well ! Stephen,' said Amy, 'I really will try ; but it is very hard sometimes.'

'Ah ! yes,' replied Stephen, 'we all have something hard, Miss Amy ; young or old, there is always something. 'Twas hard for me when the master went away and left the old house to itself, as you may say ; and there are some things that are hard now.'

'What things ?' asked Amy, as she almost stopped her donkey, and looked eagerly into the old steward's face. 'I thought you never would be unhappy again when uncle Harrington came back.'

''Tis he, and 'tisn't he, that's come,' replied Stephen. 'There's a change ; but 'twas the foolishness of an old man's heart to think that it wouldn't be so.'

'But what is changed ?' said Amy.

'Everything !' exclaimed Stephen ; 'the master, and madam, and the young ladies, and all ; only Mrs Bridget isn't a bit different.'

‘Oh, but Stephen, you know my cousins were so young when they went away—of course they are altered.’

‘To be sure, Miss Amy, I wasn’t so foolish as not to expect that ; but I did hope that the young ladies wouldn’t be above coming to see one, and talking a bit ; and that the young gentleman (God bless him and keep him, for he’s the only one) would have been here, and that, perhaps, they would have wanted a little teaching about the ponies. I had two of the little Welsh ones brought in from the hills on purpose, and took a pleasure in training them, but no one comes near me to look at them.’

‘If you would only mention it,’ said Amy, ‘I am sure my cousins would be delighted.’

‘No,’ replied Stephen, ‘it’s not in my way to put myself forward so, for those who don’t care to ask after me. If they had come down to the cottage, and said a word to me or little Nelly, and then noticed that the ponies were about there (for I keep them in the field), ’twould have been all very well, and natural like ; but I shall say nothing about it now ; only if master should inquire after any, he can have them. And master Frank, too—’twill never be like the old times till there is a young gentleman about the place.’

‘Frank is expected at Christmas,’ said Amy ; ‘he went to stay with his uncle, Sir Henry Charlton, after poor Edward died, because it was a change for him ; and he was so wretched ; and since then he has been at school.’

‘I’m growing old, Miss Amy,’ answered Stephen, ‘and Christmas is a long time to look forward to. I don’t mean to complain, only ’twould have been a comfort to have seen him here with the rest, and perhaps have kept me from thinking so much about him that’s gone : but it’s all right ; and,’ he added, more earnestly, as he brushed his hand hastily across his eyes, ‘I would not have him back again,—no, not if I could see him a king upon his throne.’

‘And does no one ever go to visit you, Stephen?’ asked Amy, rather sadly.

‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘the young lady, Miss Morton, comes very often ; and though she is not one of the family, yet it does one good to see her, and talk to her ; and then, too, she brings the little one with her ; and sure enough she’s the sweetest little cherub that ever was born.’

‘What, Rose?’ said Amy. ‘Is she not a darling little thing?’

‘I never saw but one before that I thought I could like better,’ said Stephen, laying his hard sun-burnt hand on Amy’s tiny fingers; ‘and that one, I hope, God will bless, and keep for many a long day. But I must not go on farther, for you don’t get on so fast when I am walking with you.’

Amy pressed the old man’s hand affectionately, begging him to come on only a little way, for she hardly ever saw him now.

But Stephen was firm. He had gone to his usual point, a splendid oak, commonly called the Baron’s tree, from a tradition that it had been planted when Emmerton was built; and it seemed almost as if a charm would be broken if he went further. Amy stopped, and watched him till he was out of sight, and then pursued her ride through the forest with a sadder heart than she had begun it.

‘You are late to-night, my love,’ said Mrs Herbert, as her little girl dismounted from her donkey; ‘you forget that the days are beginning to close in; and what makes you look so unhappy?’

‘Oh! not much, mamma; only please don’t stand here in the cold.’

‘You are so very suddenly careful of me,’ replied Mrs Herbert, smiling; ‘is this the last thing you learned at the Hall?’

‘No,’ answered Amy; ‘only Stephen says you look pale, and all the village people say so too; but I don’t think you are so now.’

‘I am much better to-night, my dear child,’ said Mrs Herbert. ‘You must not listen to what every one says, and get frightened without reason.’

‘Amy’s spirits were revived in a moment, and she ran gaily into the cottage, and in a very short time was seated by the fireside with her mamma, recounting the incidents of the day; Miss Cunningham, and her behaviour, her aunt’s anger, and her own conversations with Dora and old Stephen, furnishing quite sufficient materials for a long story. ‘There were one or two things that my aunt told me, which I could not quite understand,’ she said, after having repeated a great portion of the lecture she had received. ‘What did she mean, mamma, by my knowing my position, and speaking of me as if I were not one of the family? I am her niece.’

‘Yes,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘but people think differently about their families. Some persons consider that every one who

is any relation at all forms one of the family, and others only call those so who are their own children.'

'But my position,' repeated Amy; 'why is my position different from my cousins? You are a lady, and papa is a gentleman.'

'Compare this cottage with Emmerton,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'and then you will see the difference, and why people in general would think more of your cousins than of you.'

A sudden pang shot through Amy's heart. 'Dear mamma!' she exclaimed, 'I wish you would not say so.'

'Why not, my dear? why must not that be said which is true?'

'It makes me uncomfortable,' said Amy, 'and wicked too, I am afraid. If papa were to come home, should we be able to live in a larger house?'

'I do not know,' answered her mother; 'but if we could, I do not think we should wish it.'

'Ah! mamma, that is because you are so much better than I am. I never used to think so till I saw my cousins at Emmerton; but I should like very much to live in a place like that.'

Mrs Herbert looked grave, yet she felt thankful that her child spoke openly of her feelings, as it enabled her so much better to guide them.

'It is not only the house that I should enjoy,' continued Amy, 'but I think people would love me better. Margaret did not seem to think anything of me when Miss Cunningham was by; and when Lord Rochford and my uncle came in, I thought every one had more business there than I had. It was very kind in him to look at my drawings, but still I felt nobody by the side of Dora and Margaret.'

The conversation was here stopped by the entrance of Mr Walton, who often came in at this time of the evening, on his return from his visits in the parish. Amy was only half pleased to see him, for she would willingly have talked much longer to her mamma alone; but her mind was partly relieved by the confession she had made of her foolish wishes; and Mrs Herbert's countenance brightened so much at the sight of him, that she was soon reconciled to the interruption.

Mr Walton brought as usual several tales of distress and difficulty, which Mrs Herbert, notwithstanding her limited income, was always the first to relieve; and Amy, as she listened to the account of a widow with six children, unable to pay her

rent, a father on his sick bed, totally unable to provide for his family, and other cases of a similar kind, and then looked round upon the comfortable room in which she was sitting, with its bright curtains and carpet, its easy sofas and chairs, and the preparations for tea upon the table, felt grieved and ashamed that she should have allowed a pang of envy to render her for a single moment insensible to her many blessings ; and perhaps Mr Walton's parish tales produced a greater effect than even her mother's words could have done, for she went to bed that night far more contented than she had been on her return from the Hall.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING more was said about the proposed visit to Rochford Park on Amy's two following visits to Emmerton ; and though her anxiety was great to know if she were to be included in the party, she only ventured once to ask Margaret two or three questions, and then received a short, abrupt answer, that nothing was settled, and that it could not be any concern of hers. The fact was, that Margaret disliked the notice which Lord Rochford had taken of Amy, on the day he had spent at Emmerton ; for she had resolved in her own mind that she would be Miss Cunningham's friend and companion, and her fears of a rival were considerably excited. Of this, however, there was no occasion to be afraid. Amy felt not the smallest inclination to be intimate with her new acquaintance ; and her only wish for being of the party was, that she might see Rochford Park, which had always been described to her as one of the finest places in England. Mrs Harrington did not appear at all likely to give her any information, for whenever they met, which was but seldom, she only said a few words more hastily and sharply than she had done before, in order to show that she had not quite forgotten Amy's offence ; and it was not till the evening previous to the day which was at last fixed for going, that any hope was given her of accompanying them.

'Take this note to your mamma,' said Mrs Harrington, coming to the hall-door just as Amy was about to set off ; and if she should say yes to what I have asked, the carriage shall call for you at eleven ; if not, you had better come here by your-

self, as usual ; and you shall go with us to Lord Rochford's ; and we will take you home at night, though it will be considerably out of our way.'

Amy's gratitude even was subdued in her aunt's presence ; but she did manage to say something about being delighted ; and then, carefully depositing the precious note in the pocket of her saddle, she made her donkey move at its quickest pace down the road.

Mrs Harrington turned away with the consciousness of having done a disagreeable thing in a disagreeable manner. She had fully determined upon not taking Amy, it would only crowd the carriage ; and she did not wish it to be considered a necessary thing, that where her daughters went, her niece should go too ; but a note, which she had that morning received from Lord Rochford, expressly mentioning Amy, and adding a hope that Mrs Herbert would be prevailed on to comply with Lady Rochford's wishes, and join the party, left her no choice ; and it was happy for Amy that she did not know how very little her aunt desired her presence.

Mrs Harrington's note enclosed Lady Rochford's invitation, which Mrs Herbert decided at once it would be better not to accept for herself ; but she did not object to Amy's going, though she feared that if Emmerton in its quietness, and almost solemnity, excited her longings after riches and grandeur, Rochford Park would probably have a still greater effect. Yet, even if this were the case, she trusted that she should be able to check the feeling ; and she knew that the same temptations were nearly certain to arise in after-years, when she would not be at hand to put Amy on her guard against them.

Amy's delight was unmeasured. Her aunt's harsh looks, and Miss Cunningham's disagreeable manners, were quite forgotten in the pleasure she anticipated in going to a new place ; and long before her usual hour of rising she had been to the window several times to see if the weather promised to be fine. The calm, gray mist of the morning was hardly what she would have desired ; but there was a joyousness in her own spirit which made almost everything appear bright, and when at length the sun broke slowly through its veil of clouds, shedding a clear line of light over the distant hills, and then bursting forth in full radiance over the richly-wooded country, and the cheerful village, Amy's heart bounded within her, and again, as she recollected her feelings of envy on her return from Emmerton,

she sighed to think that she should have been so ungrateful as to wish for anything beyond the enjoyments which God had given her.

Punctuality was one of the virtues which Mrs Harrington strictly enforced ; and Amy almost trembled when she heard the clock strike eleven as she rode up to the lodge. She knew also, that on this point her mamma and aunt entirely agreed ; and she had received many injunctions on no account to delay on the road, and so be the means of keeping the carriage waiting—and to have vexed her mother would have been even worse than to have excited Mrs Harrington's anger. Happily, however, there were some last orders to be given, which caused a delay of about five minutes, and Amy had time to dismount, and join her cousins in the schoolroom, before her aunt appeared.

She seemed more inclined to be kind than before ; and Amy felt so much reassured by her change of manner, that, although placed in the middle of the back seat, between Dora and Margaret, and having Mrs Harrington's face nearly opposite, she contrived to be extremely happy. It was only necessary to be quite still and silent, to avoid giving offence ; and this to her was no punishment.

From being so much alone, she had learned the secret of amusing herself with her own thoughts, and found them far more agreeable than the effort of talking in a constrained way to her cousins. Dora and Margaret willingly followed her example ; the former from being rather in a sulky mood, and the latter from finding her attempts at conversation useless. The drive was consequently a quiet, but not a dull one ; and the distance appeared very short to Amy, though Dora had yawned at least four times, and at last muttered that she could never think Miss Cunningham was worth coming so far to see.

'I cannot say I want very much to see her either,' replied Amy ; 'only the place,—I would give anything to see that.'

'Then look,' said Dora, pointing to a long white building on the nearest hill, 'there it is, just to your right.'

Amy looked eagerly, and fancied she saw something very grand, though only the general outline could be discovered ; but as she came nearer, still keeping her eyes fixed upon it, she was quite satisfied that it must be what it had been described—the most splendid nobleman's seat in the county. 'Oh !' she

exclaimed, jumping up in the carriage; 'it is, yes, it really is more beautiful than Emmerton.'

'Sit still, pray,' said Dora; 'you nearly trod upon my foot.'

Amy reseated herself, and felt rebuked; but the next moment, as she caught the full front of the house through an opening in the trees, she forgot everything but her admiration, and again began expatiating upon its beauty.

'Look, Dora! is it not lovely? it is so large, so much larger than Emmerton, and then those beautiful pillars, and the broad steps with the figures in front; it is just like a palace.'

'A palace!' replied Dora; 'what nonsense you talk, only because you have never seen anything else like it. It is a very good gentleman's house; but there are hundreds in England just as fine.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Mr Harrington; 'there are very few places which can in any degree compare with it.'

'Wayland was nearly as large, papa,' answered Dora, more gently than usual; for her father's mildness had a much greater effect upon her than her mother's sharpness.

Mr Harrington smiled. 'Your affection for Wayland,' he said, 'causes you to magnify it in a strange manner. I suppose it is scarcely more than half the size.'

Amy felt rather triumphant, and a little inclined to show it, but she checked herself; and as they had now reached the park gate, a fresh interest was excited in her mind, and she had no inclination to continue the discussion.

If the exterior of the house had appeared imposing at a distance, it lost none of its effect upon a nearer approach; and when, after driving a considerable way through the park, the carriage at length stopped at the side front, Amy's expectations were raised to the highest pitch, though something of fear mingled with her pleasure as she thought of the strangers she should probably see, and wondered whether she knew exactly how it would be proper to behave.

Lord Rochford met them at the door, and expressed great pleasure at their arrival; but Amy felt a little disappointed that he did not say anything in particular to her, as her mamma had told her that he had sent her a special invitation; but Lord Rochford was at that moment too much occupied in doing the honours of his house to Mr and Mrs Harrington, and too anxious to point out the improvements he had made, and hear them pronounced perfect, to think of her.

Poor Amy felt lost and bewildered as they entered the splendid hall, with its painted ceiling, and pillars of Italian marble, and then passed on through long suites of rooms furnished in the most sumptuous manner, some hung with delicate silk, and glittering with gilded cornices and costly ornaments, and others crowded with rare pictures and richly-bound books, while sofas, ottomans, cabinets, and tables of the most exquisite workmanship gave an air of comfort to what would otherwise have appeared only desolate grandeur. It seemed to her like fairy-land. Emmerton, and its deep windows, and handsome but sombre furniture, at once sank into insignificance; and she no longer wondered that Miss Cunningham had been little inclined to admire anything there, when she could compare with it the gorgeousness of her own home.

It seemed strange, too, that her uncle and aunt could see it all without apparently noticing it. They walked quickly on, as if only wishing that there were fewer rooms to go through; Dora followed, looking round certainly, but not giving any symptoms of admiration; and Amy found that her feelings were shared by no one excepting Margaret, who, however, was more engaged in spying out what she called 'odd things,' and peeping into the books which lay on the table, than in anything else.

'I think I must leave you young ones here,' said Lord Rochford, opening a door which led into a small hall with French windows fronting the pleasure-ground. 'These are Lucy's own rooms; and she and madame will take great care of you, while Mrs Harrington pays a visit to Lady Rochford. I am afraid she is not well enough this morning to receive you all.'

Amy wondered for an instant who madame could be; but she was not left long in doubt; for immediately behind Miss Cunningham, who came forward to receive them, appeared her French governess, a tall, thin, inelegant-looking person, with a good-natured, merry face, a dress made in the newest Parisian fashion, and a cap which seemed formed rather for the purpose of receiving a certain quantity of ribbon and artificial flowers, than as any covering to the black wig which it only half concealed. Amy felt very much amused, and would perhaps have smiled, had she not remembered that there was something unfeeling, independent of its being unladylike, in turning a foreigner into ridicule; but Margaret's merriment was almost audible, as madame placed chairs for them, hoped in broken English they were not fatigued

with their drive, and then, with a swimming French curtsy, vanished from the room.

‘That is your governess, is it?’ said Dora, almost before the door was closed, in a tone which plainly spoke her opinion of her.

‘Yes,’ replied Miss Cunningham, ‘she is the most good-natured creature in the world ; and I am so fond of her. She speaks French beautifully.’

‘Not a first-rate qualification for a native,’ said Dora.

‘Oh ! but she paints flowers, too, and sings.’

‘Sings !’ repeated Margaret ; ‘but she is so old.’

‘Indeed ! no, she is not. She sings and plays the guitar ; and she is teaching me—papa has just bought me a new one.’ And Miss Cunningham took up a richly-inlaid instrument, with a long blue ribbon attached to it, and began striking some false notes which she called chords.

‘I don’t like the guitar,’ said Dora, ‘unless it is played beautifully.’

‘Oh ! but madame is quite a superior performer ; and she says I have made a wonderful proficiency, considering the few lessons I have had. She practises a great deal, not in this room, for I can’t bear the twang, but in the next, which is her own. This is my study, and the little one within I call my boudoir.’ Here Miss Cunningham looked round, apparently expecting some flattering observation to be made ; and of course all eyes were immediately directed to the room and its furniture. Dora’s gaze was the most fixed and earnest, and when it was ended, she played with her parasol, and was silent ; but Margaret declared that everything she saw was delightful—the chintz furniture such an extremely pretty pattern, the tables so well placed, the piano so very handsome, and the view from the window so lovely—that Amy found there was nothing left for her to say ; and feeling a great dislike to merely echoing Margaret’s words, she contented herself with expressing what she really thought—‘that it looked very pretty and comfortable’—and then amused herself with Margaret’s panegyrics. Miss Cunningham probably would have talked long without weariness on this favourite topic ; but Dora’s patience was soon exhausted ; and she at last interrupted a question of Margaret’s, which she foresaw would lead to one of Miss Cunningham’s long dissertations upon herself and the splendour of her family mansion, by asking whether they were to go out before dinner.

'We dine at four, altogether,' replied Miss Cunningham; 'so we had better, I suppose.' And then, turning to Margaret, she began, as Dora had feared, not merely an answer, but a history. There was no resource but to sit still and endure it; and when at length it ended, to Dora's great relief, Miss Cunningham prepared to show them through the grounds.

Amy soon found that the uncomfortable feelings she had experienced at Emmerton were beginning to return. She almost envied Dora her proud indifference; for though Miss Cunningham took little notice of her, it was quite evident that she did not wish for attention; but Amy could not be happy as one of the party, when no one spoke to her, or even appeared to recollect that she was present. The grounds were very extensive, and something lovely opened at every turn; but she felt neglected, and not all the costly flowers and shrubs in the garden, or the beautiful birds in the aviary, nor even the bright sunshine itself, could make her forget that she was with persons who did not think it worth while to interest themselves about her.

Perhaps the very charm of the place only increased her uneasiness. It was so rich and brilliant, that it seemed more than to realise all she could possibly desire; but there was no hope that *her* father would ever possess anything like it—it was to be looked upon, but not to be enjoyed; and as she remembered the tale of Aladdin's lamp, she longed that it could be hers but for one moment, that she might raise a palace, not for herself but her mamma, which should be in every respect like Rochford Park. These dreams so absorbed Amy's mind that she paid but little attention to what passed between Margaret and Miss Cunningham; for they were the only two who conversed, Dora being too grand to make any remarks beyond what were absolutely necessary. At length, however, she was struck by Miss Cunningham's exclaiming, in rather a more energetic tone than usual, 'Pray, has your mamma mentioned anything to you about the new plan?'

'Plan,' repeated Margaret. 'No. What do you mean?'

'Oh! the plan about our going to London.'

'We can have nothing to do with that,' said Margaret.

'Yes, you have; it is your plan as well as ours.'

'But what do you mean,' continued Margaret; 'I never heard a word about it before.'

'Why, you know,' said Miss Cunningham, 'that papa and my brother generally go to town in the spring, and leave mamma,

and me, and madame, here, because there is some fancy about its suiting mamma better ; and dreadfully dull it is. But now I am growing so old, they think it quite right that I should have some one better to teach me than poor madame ; and mamma has promised to let me go to London after Easter, and one of my aunts is to be with me, and I am to see everything, and have lessons in everything.'

'But that is no concern of ours,' said Margaret ; 'and Easter is so far off.'

'It does concern you, though,' replied Miss Cunningham, 'for papa has got it into his head that I shall learn much better if I can get some other girls to have lessons with me. He says it will be much more amusing, and I shall like it better ; and so he has been trying to persuade your mamma to let you go up too, and then the same masters will do for all.'

'Then that is what Lord Rochford meant the other day,' said Amy, 'when he talked about a plan, and begged aunt Harrington to mention it to mamma.'

'Did he wish you to go too?' asked Miss Cunningham.

The words of this question were very simple ; but the tone of it showed plainly that the idea was not agreeable ; and Amy felt quite abashed, and answered hurriedly, that she did not know what was wished, for that no more had been said upon the subject.

'Won't it be delightful?' said Miss Cunningham to Margaret. 'We shall be together so much, and shall go to the theatre ; and, perhaps there will be some parties for girls of our age ; you know there are such things.'

'It would be all very nice if there were any chance of it,' replied Margaret.

'And why should there not be?' exclaimed Miss Cunningham, who had never dreamt of any obstacle to a wish of her father's.

'Because,' said Margaret, 'mamma will not allow it.'

'And why not ? what objection can she have?'

'She will not let us go while Emily Morton is with us,' said Margaret, 'because she does not think it necessary. Before she came, I often used to hear her talk of taking us to London for masters, but now she never mentions it ; and it was only yesterday I heard her say that we had greater advantages at present than we possibly could have by any other means.'

'Oh ! but that is all nonsense,' said Miss Cunningham. 'Just

let papa talk to her for ten minutes, and she will soon come round.'

'You don't know mamma,' replied Dora, who, being very firm and decided herself, particularly admired decision in others. 'If she does not approve of the plan, all the world might talk to her, and it would have no effect.'

'But why does Miss Morton stay with you?' asked Miss Cunningham. 'Are you very fond of her?'

'Fond of her!' exclaimed Margaret. 'No, indeed; it would rejoice my heart to see her fairly out of the house.'

'It would not mine,' said Amy, whose spirit was roused at hearing a person she loved so mentioned.

A moment before Dora would have taken Miss Morton's part, but she could not bear Amy to interfere as if it were her business; and, in an irritated voice, she asked, what it could possibly signify whether she liked Miss Morton or not.

'Nothing,' replied Amy, gently; 'only I am very fond of her?'

'Then I wish you would keep her,' said Margaret. 'I shall dislike her more than ever, now; for I shall always think she is preventing us from going to London.'

'But why don't you persuade your mamma to get rid of her?' exclaimed Miss Cunningham. 'Madame would not stay an hour in the house if I did not like her.'

'Ah, but it is very different with us,' replied Margaret. 'Mamma will have her own way about it; she knows very well that we dislike Emily, and she is always finding fault with her, herself; but when it came to the point I am certain she would say no. And then, too, both papa and mamma hate London, and would be very glad of an excuse for not going.'

'But do you really think,' asked Miss Cunningham, 'that if it were not for Miss Morton they would be obliged to do it?'

'Yes; at least they always said so before Emily came.'

'Well! if you are quite sure of that, I can see no reason why we should not try and manage the matter between us.'

'Hush!' exclaimed Margaret, who observed that Amy seemed quite aghast at the cool way in which this was said; 'there is no use in speaking about it now. Is that your dinner-bell?'

'Yes; but there is no hurry; do promise to talk to your mamma. I am sure papa will do all he can—we should be so happy together in London.'

'Without Emily Morton,' said Margaret; 'it would drive me wild to feel she was always tacked on to me.'

‘O Margaret! how unkind you are!’ exclaimed Amy. ‘You know Miss Morton is always trying to please every one, and she never gets out of temper.’

‘Miss Morton pets you till she makes you as disagreeable as she is herself,’ said Margaret, angrily.

Amy for an instant was strongly inclined to retort; but she did not give way to the feeling, and, preferring to walk behind with Dora, did not speak again till they reached the house. Margaret and Miss Cunningham immediately began a low, and apparently a very interesting conversation; for it was continued at intervals even when they were dressing for dinner, though, whenever Dora or Amy approached them, they broke off abruptly, looking very mysterious, as if the fate of the world depended on no person’s knowing what they were talking of. But Amy thought little about them, being entirely engrossed with the dread of dining for the first time at what appeared to her a regular party. The feeling had been lurking in her mind during the whole day, but the novelty of all she had seen had distracted her attention. Now, however, the awful moment was drawing near; and even her desire to see everything, and her admiration of the house and furniture, could not prevent her from wishing that she could transport herself back to the cottage just till dinner was over. She felt also quite overpowered by Miss Cunningham’s dress, and the profusion of brooches and chains, with which she adorned herself, turning them over one by one, with an air of the utmost indifference; and then, finding that her visitors did not make any observation, calling to them to ask their opinion as to which suited her best. Dora took care to object to almost all, or to compare them with something more splendid belonging to other people; but Amy, who had never yet seen such beautiful things worn by a person so young, expressed her admiration very openly; and then, as she caught sight of her plain silk frock in the large looking-glass, wondered whether Lady Rochford would think it very strange that she was not dressed equally well.

‘May I sit by you, Dora?’ she whispered, as they went downstairs.

‘I can’t tell,’ replied Dora; ‘it will depend upon how we go in to dinner.’

‘But what shall I do?’ asked Amy. ‘Do you think any one will speak to me?’ Dora laughed; but when she looked at her cousin, she saw that her eyes were almost filled with tears. ‘I

am so frightened,' continued Amy, 'I know I shall do something very wrong, and then every one will stare at me. If I might only stay in the drawing-room——'

'Every one would stare at you a great deal more then,' replied Dora; 'besides, there is no party; there will be only Lord and Lady Rochford, and Mr Cunningham and ourselves.'

'Mr Cunningham!' said Amy. 'Is he very old?'

'Oh yes, quite grown up,' replied Dora. 'But you need not trouble yourself about him, for I daresay he will not speak to you; and, if he does, you won't understand him.'

Amy recollected having heard Dora mention Mr Cunningham's peculiar voice before; and she was on the point of asking her to explain what was the matter with it, but they were standing at the drawing-room door, and there was no time.

Lady Rochford was seated on the sofa, talking to Mrs Harrington; and Amy was instantly struck with the likeness between her and her daughter. There was the same sandy hair, the same dull eye, the same fair complexion, the only difference being in the greater softness of expression, and the lines which continual illness and additional years had worn in her face. Her dress, too, was very youthful; and it was difficult for a stranger to believe that she could possibly be the mother of the tall, gentlemanly young man, who stood by her side, apparently intent upon examining the ornaments on the mantelpiece. Lady Rochford's manner, however, had none of Miss Cunningham's scornfulness; her temper was very sweet, and it was her wish to make every one about her happy; and if she did sometimes fail, it was more from over attention, and insisting upon their enjoying themselves in her way rather than in their own, than from any other cause. Amy felt relieved by the kindness with which she spoke to her, and almost happy when she had contrived to hide herself behind Dora, and could look at what was going on without being observed; and dinner being announced almost immediately, she kept close by her side, hoping that, after all, she might not find it as terrible as she had expected. But her hope was soon crushed. There was a slight confusion as they went into the dining-room; no one seemed to know exactly where to place themselves; and Amy was obliged to leave Dora, and take the vacant seat between her aunt Harrington and Mr Cunningham.

'George, you will take care of your little neighbour,' said Lord Rochford; 'do find out what she would like to have.'

The silent Mr Cunningham turned to Amy, and spoke ; but whether his words were English, French, or German, it would have been impossible for her in her fright to have told. By persons who were well acquainted with him, he was very easily understood ; but, in consequence of a defect in the formation of his mouth, his articulation was so indistinct, as to be almost unintelligible to strangers ; and Amy looked at him, with mingled fear and surprise. Again he endeavoured to render his meaning clear ; but not a word could Amy comprehend, though, guessing what he would say, she faltered, ‘Chicken, if you please,’ and then looked at her aunt, and blushed painfully, from the idea that she had done exactly the very thing she ought not. Mr Cunningham apparently was very desirous of seeing her comfortable ; for, during dinner, he made a point of offering her everything on the table which he thought she might like ; and each time he opened his lips Amy’s distress revived. But the climax of misery was, when, after the dessert being placed on the table, he seemed inclined to enter into conversation with her. Happily she caught the words, ‘live at Emmerton,’ in his first sentence, and contrived to answer it correctly ; but as he went on, the confusion of sound increased, and, perfectly bewildered between endeavouring to make out the meaning of the last question and the dread of hearing a new one, she continued to repeat ‘Yes’ and ‘No,’ at regular intervals, resolving in her own mind that it would be better to live at the cottage all her life, even if it were twice as small, and she were never to see any one, than be condemned to the penance of talking to Mr Cunningham.

Her cousins, from the opposite side of the table, watched her with considerable amusement, though, after a short time, Dora’s compassion was much excited, and once or twice she attempted to help her, by partly repeating the question when she understood it better than Amy ; but this only served to increase Mr Cunningham’s desire to make himself intelligible, and the eagerness with which he went over the ground again, rendered the sounds only the more perplexing, so that Dora was obliged to resign Amy to her fate, and wait with patience till Lady Rochford should move.

The looked-for moment did at last arrive, and Amy’s spirits rose like those of a prisoner released from captivity ; for nearly at the last moment, having answered ‘Yes,’ when she ought to have said ‘No,’ she found a large bunch of grapes placed upon her plate, and, not liking to confess she had misunderstood, and still

less liking to eat them, she was obliged to leave them, and went out, wondering whether Mr Cunningham would remark it, and, if he did, what he would think of her.

The evening was but short, and to Amy it was rather stupid. Margaret and Miss Cunningham left the room together soon after dinner, and only appeared again when they were summoned to tea. Lady Rochford talked a good deal to Dora, and asked her to play and sing; but she said very little to Amy, except that observing her interested in a book of prints, which Miss Cunningham had brought before dinner for Margaret to see, she declared that it must be much more agreeable to her to look at a cabinet of minerals; and, taking the book away, Amy was obliged, for the next half hour, to turn over a number of drawers filled with odd-shaped stones, and pieces of iron and copper, about which she knew nothing, and cared less.

There was some pleasure, notwithstanding, for there was no necessity to admire them, and she could stand with them in her hand, and amuse herself with the other things in the room, since no one took any notice of her; but the marked difference between herself and her cousins, had never been so observable before. Even the servants overlooked her, and forgot to offer her any coffee; and her wishes of the morning returned with redoubled vigour. Not that she would have been Miss Cunningham, for her own mother was a treasure beyond all price; she would only willingly have given her an equal share of the world's riches and grandeur. Mr Cunningham did not come into the drawing-room till tea was nearly over; but Lord Rochford and Mr Harrington soon joined them, and the former immediately began urging upon Mrs Harrington the importance of acceding to the plan he had mentioned at Emmerton.

Amy saw that her aunt was annoyed by the subject being named so openly, for she remarked immediately that it was time for them to prepare for returning; and though Dora and Margaret lingered as long as they could to hear what was said, she preserved perfect silence until they were gone.

'Mamma will say no,' exclaimed Margaret; 'I could see it by the way she bit her lip.'

'And papa will make her say yes,' replied Miss Cunningham. 'He never gives up anything he has set his heart on.'

'Then there is one good thing,' said Dora; 'they will have a subject of interest to discuss for the remainder of their lives. You might just as easily move this wall as mamma.'

'I shall never rest till it is settled,' continued Miss Cunningham; 'fancy the delight of being in London, and driving about in the parks, and seeing all the shops, and buying whatever one likes. I shall give all my old dresses to my maid; for I am determined to have quite a new set of my own choosing.'

'It would be very nice,' said Margaret, with a sigh of hopeless regret; 'and to think that that pale-faced, black-haired Emily Morton should be the only thing to stand in the way.'

'Ah!' said Miss Cunningham, significantly, 'we will see about that,' and some more whispering went on between her and Margaret.

Amy did not remark this conversation; but she said in a low voice to Dora, 'Does Mr Cunningham go to town with them always?'

'Yes,' answered Dora, laughing; 'and you must go to town too, to learn his language. French, Italian, German, and double-Dutch,—what an accomplished person you will be!'

'I don't mean to be unkind to him,' said Amy; 'but it would take off a great deal of my pleasure.'

'Oh no, it would not; it is only because you are not accustomed to him—every one in the house understands him.'

'Do they? but then they are older. O Dora! you cannot think how frightened I was. I was so afraid he would think me rude and unfeeling.'

'I should have been afraid of laughing,' said Dora; 'I never heard such an extraordinary voice in my life.'

'Perhaps I might have laughed if he had not been so kind; and then it vexes mamma so, if I ever ridicule a person's misfortunes; she says that we never can tell when the same things may be sent to ourselves.'

Dora was thoughtful for a minute; at length she said, 'You are so grave about things, Amy; it is not human nature not to laugh at such oddities.'

'But,' replied Amy, 'mamma says we have two natures, a good one and a bad one, and that human nature is the bad one.'

'Two natures!' exclaimed Dora, 'what can you mean?'

'I wish you would ask mamma some day,' answered Amy; 'she would tell you so much better than I can.'

'She would find it so much trouble,' said Dora, sadly; 'I have not been taught like you.' And she turned hastily away, and, scolding Margaret for being so slow in getting ready,

declared it would not do to wait any longer, and ran downstairs.

It was a happy thing for Amy that her dread of Mr Cunningham prevented her from indulging to its full extent the wish of accompanying her cousins to London, if Mr Harrington should consent to their going ; but the incidents of the day had been quite sufficient to excite her imagination to the utmost. The magnificence of Rochford Park had realised many of her gayest dreams ; and while her uncle and aunt, and her cousins, giving way to the weariness consequent on a long day, composed themselves to sleep, she felt quite at liberty to build a castle in the air, which should have all the splendour of the princely mansion they had left, without the drawback of its inhabitants. In a few moments she was living at a park, with her father returned from India, her mother in perfect health and happiness, and her cousins and Emily Morton on a visit to them. The house was filled with company ; there were pleasant drives and rides, a pony for herself and a pony-chaise for her mamma, handsome dinners, and amusements of every kind for her father's visitors ; and the chapel was also thought of, but it seemed inconsistent with her other dreams, and she could not decide upon its being used every day—perhaps once a-week would be sufficient. Then again the scene changed to London—to handsome shops, and beautiful dresses, and rich ornaments, just like Miss Cunningham's ; and the delight of going to a play when she liked, having constantly new books, and being able to make presents to all her friends ; and in the midst of this vision of grandeur, the carriage stopped at the little white gate of Emmerton cottage. Her mother's voice recalled her to herself ; but even its much-loved gentle tone could not at that instant entirely content her. A feeling of dissatisfaction with everything had taken possession of her mind, and the gaiety of her spirit was fled.

But few words passed between Mrs Herbert and her brother, Mrs Harrington complaining of being extremely cold, and objecting to the horses being kept standing ; and Amy was not sorry for this, as she longed to be quiet with her mamma after the excitement of the day. Her spirits, however, were too much depressed to be again roused even by the interest of talking over all she had done and seen ; and after a few attempts at answering her mamma's questions, she gave it up in despair, and burst into tears. Mrs Herbert guessed directly what was

the matter, on finding that Amy could assign no reason for her distress. Her cousins had not been unkind, her aunt had not been angry, she had seen everything she expected ; but she was quite tired, and this was the only account she could give. 'I suspect a night's rest will be the most certain means of making you feel happy again, my love,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'suppose you prepare to go to bed, and I will hear all you can tell me to-morrow.'

'I should like very much to talk to you to-night,' replied Amy, almost sobbing ; 'I am very unhappy, but I cannot tell why.'

'At any rate,' continued her mother, 'it would be better to wait a little while, and when you are ready to read, you shall come to my room, and then you can say all you wish, and go to bed afterwards with your mind at ease.'

'But I would rather say it now,' answered Amy, 'if I only knew how to begin. I don't think, mamma, it makes me happy seeing fine places.'

'Because you wish they were your own ; is that the reason ?'

'I long for them very much,' replied Amy ; 'but, mamma, I have told you all about it before.'

'Yes, my dear child, so you have ; but knowing that you have told me before, will not ease your mind now.'

'Only that I don't like repeating it all over again,' said Amy ; 'it seems as if all you had said had done me no good.'

'It takes a very long time to make any one good,' answered her mother, 'so you must not be disheartened even if you do find the same bad feelings returning again and again. I daresay you have been dreaming of having a large house like Rochford Park, and quantities of money to spend just as you please ; and now, when you find you must be contented with a small house, and very little money, you are unhappy.'

'I don't want it all for myself,' said Amy.

'But even for others,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'you desire to give them something that God has thought fit they should not have ; which do you think knows best what is good ?'

'O mamma ! indeed I am sure that God is wiser than any one ; but I cannot help wishing.'

'Do you remember, Amy, the promise you have so often repeated to me ; I mean the promise made for you at your baptism ; that you would renounce "the pomps and vanities of this wicked world ?"'

'But, mamma, I do not want any pomp ; I should not care to

be a queen; and it would make me miserable to have anything to do with what was wicked.'

'My dear,' said Mrs Herbert, 'the pomps and vanities of the world are different to different people. If Susan Reynolds, for instance, were anxious to live in this cottage, and wear a silk dress like yours, she would be longing for pomps and vanities, because she would be coveting something beyond her station; and so, when you are desiring to live at Emmerton or Rochford Park, you are equally wrong.'

'Then why does my uncle live at such a large place, and have so many servants and carriages, if he has promised to renounce them?' asked Amy. 'Is it wicked?'

'No,' answered Mrs Herbert, 'it is not wicked in him, because they are things proper to the station in which God has placed him. A king must live in grandeur, so must a nobleman,—it is befitting their dignity; and private gentlemen, when they have large fortunes, are obliged to do the same, only in a less degree. But such persons have a very difficult task assigned them, as it is almost incumbent upon them to maintain a certain degree of splendour in their style of living; and yet God will assuredly one day call them strictly to account for any wilful extravagance or self-indulgence.'

'But why was the promise made for them, if they never can keep it?' said Amy.

'Because,' replied her mother, 'renouncing does not mean that we are to give up all the blessings which God has bestowed upon us; but it does mean that we are not to pride ourselves upon them, or rest our happiness on them, or covet more than we possess. It means that we should use them entirely for the benefit of our fellow-creatures, that we should be perfectly willing to part with them if God were to require it, and should be as happy in a cottage with only bread to eat, as we should be in a palace.'

'O mamma! no one can feel so.'

'Look, Amy,' said Mrs Herbert, taking up the Bible which she had been reading during her child's absence; 'have you never seen this before? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" and "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke xviii. 24, 25). These are our Saviour's words; do you think that any one who really believed they were true could wish for riches?'

Amy hid her face on her mother's shoulder, and her tears again fell fast. Mrs Herbert went on. 'It is quite necessary, my dear child,' she said, 'that you should learn what you wish for, before you indulge in any dreams of greatness. You are desiring what, our Saviour says, makes it almost impossible for a person to enter into heaven; and you yourself have just acknowledged that it must be the case. I told you the disposition of mind which God requires of us; that, if we have riches, we should be ready in a moment to part with them, and be quite contented without them, and you immediately exclaimed that it could not be; and yet God will not own us as His children unless we have this spirit, or at least strive very hard to obtain it.'

'Mamma,' said Amy, in a low voice, 'indeed, I will try not to wish any more.'

'I am sure you will, my love,' replied her mother; 'and I am sure, also, that if you pray to God, He will assist you; but it will require very many attempts before you can succeed. And will you remember, also, how vain and foolish it is for those who are the children of God, and look forward to living with Him in heaven, to set their hearts upon anything this world can give? You would laugh if you saw a person who was one day to possess a kingdom, sighing for a little cottage, or a small garden; but the most glorious kingdom that could be given us here, even the world itself, is nothing when compared with what God has promised us hereafter.'

'If I could but see it for one moment,' said Amy, 'I should never wish again.'

'Yes,' answered her mother, 'if we were to see it, our difficulty would be at an end; but God has placed us here to try us, to prove whether we will believe that we shall have what He has promised, though whilst we are on earth it is hidden from us. If I told you that to-morrow you would have a splendid present made you, but that I could not show it to you to-day, would you not believe me?'

'Oh yes,' replied Amy, 'you always keep your word.'

'And if I read to you in God's Word, the description of the beautiful home in which, our Saviour tells us, we shall one day live, will you not believe Him?' But Amy did not answer, for her heart was full. 'I will not talk any more to you now, my dear child,' continued Mrs Herbert: 'but I will read to you presently those two concluding chapters in the last book in the

Bible, which you have only occasionally heard. 'They will do far more to calm your mind than anything I can say.'

Amy went to her room ; and the last sound that mingled with her dreams, was her mother's gentle voice, as she sat by the bedside, describing to her, in the words of the Bible, the blessedness of that glorious city, which shall have no 'need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE autumn months passed quickly away, and brought but little change in Amy's life, except that her visits to Emmerton became less frequent, as the uncertainty of the weather obliged her to depend more upon her uncle's carriage ; but she still practised her music under her mother's direction, and copied Miss Morton's drawings at home, and made up by diligence for the superior advantages which her cousins enjoyed. The London plan had been often mentioned, but, as Margaret foretold, Mrs Harrington was decidedly opposed to it, and became at last quite annoyed whenever any reference was made to it ; and the idea would probably have completely died away, had it not been for Miss Cunningham, who, notwithstanding the distance between Emmerton and the Park, contrived to be a very constant visitor ; and whenever she appeared, London was invariably the theme of conversation. There needed no description, however, to excite Margaret's wishes, and Dora would have been equally anxious, if her dislike to Miss Cunningham had not prevented her from entering into any scheme of enjoyment in which she was to participate. But Miss Cunningham's earnestness on the subject did not exhaust itself in mere words. Her first object had been to induce her papa to urge the scheme on Mrs Harrington as often as they met, and when, after many trials, this was found to fail, the only thing that remained was to get rid of the one great obstacle, Emily Morton. Lord Rochford was persuaded to criticise her drawings, to find fault with her style of playing, and to declare that her voice was extremely indifferent, in the hope that Mrs Harrington might at last yield to the necessity of

having better instruction for her daughters. But Mrs Harrington was not so easily deceived ; she was far too good a judge of both music and drawing, to be influenced by what Lord Rochford said, and only answered him with cool indifference in public, and laughed at his ignorance in private. Yet Margaret and her friend did not despair. There was one resource left ; though Mrs Harrington could not be persuaded to part with Miss Morton, Miss Morton might be induced to leave Mrs Harrington ; and when this notion entered their heads, a series of petty persecutions commenced according to a plan that had been determined on at Rochford Park, which, with any other disposition, could hardly have failed of success. But Miss Morton was invulnerable ; she felt that it was her duty to remain at Emmerton ; and without paying any attention to looks and inuendoes, or even open words, she pursued her round of daily duties with the same unruffled temper, the same cheerful smile, as if her life had been one of uninterrupted happiness. The only difference observable was during Miss Cunningham's visits, when she generally spent as much of her time with Rose in her own room as was possible ; and this, quite as much on the little girl's account as on her own ; for Miss Cunningham, having just cleverness sufficient to discover that Rose was Miss Morton's great interest and anxiety, endeavoured to interfere with her in every possible way, distracting her attention from anything in which she might be engaged, and teasing her so much, that even Dora's indignation was at length roused. Of all this, Amy saw but little. The days were now so short that she had only time to take her lesson and return home ; but she could not help observing it occasionally, and then longed to be Miss Morton's friend, and to be a comfort to her ; and still more did she wish that Emily could be often with her mamma, and be enabled to tell her all she was suffering. But to this there was an obstacle, which Miss Morton would have felt, though Amy was not sensible of it. To have repeated all that passed at Emmerton, would have been in her eyes betraying the secrecy in some degree necessary in private life, and to Mrs Harrington's sister it would have been quite impossible. If there was a complaint to be made, Mrs Harrington was the person to whom to apply for the remedy ; and if she did not choose to do this, it could not be right to seek assistance from any other person ; and thus, day after day, Emily bore silently and meekly the scorn of folly and ignorance, with but one Friend to guide her, one hope to cheer her, and yet feeling that that

Friend and that hope were sufficient in all things for her comfort. Mrs Herbert's interest in Miss Morton had been much excited by Amy's account, and she was induced to think over many plans that might render her life happier. The undertaking, however, was a difficult one, for it was impossible to intrude on her confidence ; and there were few opportunities for gaining it, as Mrs Harrington always made some objection to her going to the cottage. Perhaps she feared that Miss Morton's history of her life at Emmerton might not sound favourably in her sister's ears ; but, whatever might be the cause, the dislike became so apparent, that Mrs Herbert gave up all hope of being useful, until the idea of an introduction to Mrs Walton suggested itself to her mind. In her Miss Morton would find everything that she could require ; warm affection, superior judgment, and the advice and sympathy which Mrs Herbert's position rendered it impossible to give ; and with such a friend at hand, there would be comparatively little to fear for Emily's comfort.

Of Mrs Walton's willingness to cultivate the acquaintance, Mrs Herbert had no doubt. It seemed impossible, indeed, that any one could look at Emily Morton without feeling the deepest interest in her ; yet the charm was not that of mere personal beauty ; many might have criticised the colour of her hair and eyes, and found fault with her pale, transparent complexion, but none could be insensible to the simple grace of her manner, the musical sweetness of her voice, and, above all, the calm, soft, expression of countenance, which was but the outward sign of that 'meek and quiet spirit,' which, the Bible says, 'is in the sight of God of great price.' Without Mrs Herbert's recommendation Emily would have been a welcome visitor at the rectory ; but with it, Mrs Walton's feelings were so much excited in her favour, that even Amy was quite satisfied as to her being properly appreciated, though she still longed that her mamma could know her more intimately.

But Miss Morton was not Amy's only object of compassion at the Hall. As Christmas approached, Dora's spirits evidently sank ; she became more silent and abstracted, took little interest in what was passing, and, if any remark was made upon her low spirits, either roused herself to a forced gaiety, or shut herself up in her own room, and remained there for a considerable time. Amy longed to ask what was the matter, but she did not dare ; and they now met so seldom, that the hope of discovering it seemed vain. It was therefore a cause of satisfaction to her, in-

dependent of her own enjoyment, to hear that it was Mr Harrington's wish, that the week before and the week after Christmas should be spent by her mamma and herself at Emmerton, as she was certain the arrangement would give pleasure to Emily Morton, and thought it possible that her mamma might be some comfort to her cousin. Dora was the first to give her the intelligence ; but although she declared it would be very nice to have Amy staying there, and expressed a hope that her aunt would be comfortable, she did not really seem to care much about it.

'It will not be gay as it used to be at Wayland,' she said ; 'there we always had the house full of people, but now there are only a few coming, whom I know nothing about. I believe we are to have some boys and two or three girls, but we have scarcely ever seen them. Two of the boys are the young Dornfords, and, besides, there will be the Miss Stanleys, and Mary Warner, and the little Danvers ; but I shall hate it, for I don't know what we shall do with them.'

'Frank will amuse Mr Dornford's boys,' said Amy, who knew all their names, though she had never been accustomed to visit in the neighbourhood.

'Yes ! but Frank is not used to it.'

'Don't look so very unhappy, dear Dora,' replied Amy, 'I cannot bear to see it ; you always seem out of spirits now, and I would give anything in the world if I could help you.'

'Would you ?' said Dora, looking at her earnestly ; 'that is more than half the people I know would say.'

'But it is true ; only, of course, I cannot be any good to you.'

'No one can be any good to me now ; I knew I should be wretched when Christmas came.'

'But why ?' asked Amy.

'Oh ! never mind,' said Dora, rather hastily, 'I cannot talk about it ; please don't say anything to anybody.'

'But if you would talk to some one else, would not that help you ?'

'Whom should I talk to ?' said Dora.

'Do you never tell your mamma when you are unhappy ?' continued Amy, though she felt that to have asked for sympathy from Mrs Harrington in her own case would have been impossible.

'Talk to mamma !' exclaimed Dora ; 'why, I could more easily be miserable all the days of my life ; besides,' she added,

'I said no one could help me ; no one can bring back——,' the sentence remained unfinished, for her voice was choked, and her eyes were blinded with tears.

Amy had always hitherto felt in a certain degree afraid of showing any affection to Dora—her manner was in general so cold, that she never knew how far it would be returned ; but the sight of her present distress was quite sufficient to overcome every feeling of the kind, and, putting her arm round her cousin's neck, she said very gently, 'But he is so happy now.'

Dora hid her face in her hands, and did not answer for several minutes ; at last, rousing herself with a great effort, she said, 'Amy, I am very cross to you sometimes.'

'Oh no !' replied Amy, 'don't think about that ; you know we are all cross occasionally.'

'He was never cross to any one,' said Dora, in a voice so low, that it sounded as if she were speaking to herself.

'Miss Morton told me how good and kind he was,' replied Amy, 'and how miserable you were when he was taken ill.'

'Did she ?' exclaimed Dora, with interest ; 'I did not know she ever thought about me.'

'O Dora ! indeed, I am sure she does think about you a great deal, and would love you very much, if——'

'If what ? why should you be afraid of speaking out ?'

'If you would love her,' continued Amy, hesitatingly.

'It would be no use if I did,' replied Dora ; 'she is as cold as a stone to every one but Rose and you, and as proud as a queen.'

'But she spoke of you so kindly the other day, and said that she could not bear to see you in such bad spirits, and that she was so sorry about poor Edward ; and then she told me that in some things she thought you were like him.'

'Me ! no indeed, nobody could think that ; he was like no one else.'

'Not Frank ?' asked Amy, anxious to make her cousin converse upon the subject she knew was uppermost in her thoughts.

'No,' replied Dora ; 'Frank is thoughtless and hasty, but *he* never said a harsh word to any one, not to me even !'

'It would have been hard to speak crossly to you, when you were so fond of him,' said Amy.

'Ah ! you don't know,' answered Dora, while a host of recollections flashed across her mind, of taunting looks, and angry words, and selfish actions, which at the time were thought of as

nothing, but which now stood forth in their true light. For a short time she was silent ; and then, turning abruptly to Amy, she said, 'Then you will come next Monday—aunt Herbert is to have the green room and the boudoir, and you are to have the dressing-room.'

Amy was vexed ; she longed to continue the conversation about Edward, and she was always pleased and interested when Dora spoke of her own feelings, for it seemed as if she were then admitted to a secret which no one else was allowed to share. 'I shall like it very much if mamma will consent, and if you will be happy,' she said ; 'only I wish there were to be no strangers.'

'Don't think about me,' replied Dora, 'and pray don't say anything about my being out of spirits ; I shall do very well by and by.'

'I wish Frank were here,' said Amy.

'Frank will do no good, only make a noise ; but I shall be happy again after Christmas. I did not think half so much about it a month ago, and not even when first I came here, because everything was new ; but he always came home about this time, and I used to look forward to it so—at last I quite counted the days.'

Amy saw how hopeless it was to attempt to comfort her cousin. She could only show by looks and manner the pain she felt at her unhappiness ; and with this Dora was quite satisfied. Amy's silent sympathy was consoling, where words would have distressed her ; but it was not natural to her to speak much of her own feelings, and again she turned the conversation to the intended visit.

'If you come on Monday,' she said, 'we shall have a few days to ourselves, for no one is to be here till after Friday, which is Christmas-day.'

'And will they all come together ?' asked Amy.

'No ; that is what provokes me so. If there were a good many, they would entertain each other ; but I can't imagine what we shall do with two or three. I think I shall try again to make mamma alter the plan.'

'But you will have Margaret to help you.'

'She will be worse than nothing ; for Lord Rochford and Miss Cunningham are to come on Saturday, and you know very well that, when they are here, Margaret will think of nothing else.'

'Is Miss Cunningham really coming ?' asked Amy, looking very blank.

Dora laughed. 'You should not let your face tell such tales, Amy; now I speak out at once, and say, I can't endure her, and you had much better do the same.'

'No,' replied Amy, 'I don't like to do it unless I am obliged, and I dare say a great deal of the fault is my own; but I care much more about Miss Morton than anything else—Miss Cunningham treats her so ill.'

'Yes, she makes even me angry sometimes, and you know I am not in love with your dear Emily.'

'You like her better than you will own, though,' said Amy, looking gaily in her cousin's face, 'and a great deal better than you did.'

'I don't know; I don't dislike her always; and I cannot bear to see that Lucy Cunningham tormenting her so.'

'And to-morrow you will not dislike her at all,' continued Amy; 'and the next day you will take her part, and the day after you will quite love her.'

'No, I shall never love her. I am sure I am much more given to hating than loving. I am not like you, Amy, who seem to care for everything, and everybody.'

'Not everything,' said Amy, laughing; 'your ugly tabby cat, for instance, Dora, I never could love that.'

'Oh! that is compassion; I only pet her because all the rest abuse her.'

'And Miss Morton, it is just the same with her.'

Dora shook her head. 'It is no use, Amy,' she answered. 'You know very well, that if I were to begin loving Emily Morton now, and to go on for the rest of my life, she never could like me in return.'

'And why not?'

'Because—because—I cannot tell why; but I am sure she could not.'

'O Dora!' said Amy, 'I do not think you can guess how good Miss Morton is, or how easily she would forgive.'

'Forgive!' exclaimed Dora, quickly, 'what should she forgive?'

Amy blushed deeply; 'I beg your pardon, Dora, only I thought you meant ——'

'Well! go on; meant what?'

'Don't be angry with me, dear Dora, only I thought, perhaps, you fancied that Miss Morton would not like you, because sometimes, you know, you show that you do not like her.'

'You had better say it in plain words,' exclaimed Dora, whilst the working of her forehead showed the storm that was gathering; 'because sometimes—no—very often, you know you are very cross.'

'No, Dora,' replied Amy, gently; 'I do not wish to say it in any other words; it would be wrong in me, for you know it is not my place to tell you you are cross; and, besides, I am often cross myself.'

'But you meant it, I know you meant it; just say now whether you did.'

'I wish you would not ask me anything about it; I did not mean to vex you, and I was careless when I spoke.'

'You were, indeed,' said Dora; 'and, perhaps, the next time, you will think twice before you accuse persons who are older than yourself.'

Amy was about to vindicate herself, but she had learned from Miss Morton to bear an unjust accusation patiently, when she knew that excuses would only increase anger; and again begging Dora's pardon, and saying she was very sorry for having annoyed her, she began putting her drawing materials together, and preparing to return home. Dora's first impulse was to leave the room; but she was so well aware of having been harsh, that she could not quite make up her mind to go, and she lingered about, first taking up a book, and then looking out of the window, and longing for Amy to say something, though it was too great an effort to do so herself. Amy, however, still continued silent; and at length, when everything was collected, went up-stairs to put on her bonnet and cloak. Dora, lately, had been in the habit of assisting her; but now, instead of accompanying her, she seated herself by the fire, and tried to read, though without being able to fix her attention. In a few minutes Amy reappeared, and holding out her hand to her cousin, told her that her donkey was at the door, and she must go directly.

'Good-bye,' said Dora, in a cold, constrained voice, which gave no symptom of the struggle within.

Amy looked distressed. 'Are you angry with me, still?' she asked.

'Angry! why should I be angry?'

'Because I spoke so thoughtlessly.'

'Oh!' said Dora, 'it is not worth while to be angry at such a trifle. Good-bye.'

‘I cannot go in this way ; it makes me so unhappy not to be forgiven,’ said Amy.

‘Well !’ replied Dora, ‘I forgive you ; are you satisfied now ?’

‘No,’ said Amy, sadly, ‘because I don’t think it is real forgiveness ; I wish I could do anything to show you that I am sorry.’

‘Will you kiss me ?’ asked Dora, whose proud spirit was almost entirely subdued by her cousin’s meekness, though she could not yet bring herself to confess she had been in fault. Amy’s answer was a kiss, so hearty, that Dora’s impulse was to return it equally ; and then, for almost the first time in her life, she said voluntarily, ‘Amy, you were right and I was wrong.’

Amy felt this was true, though she would not say so at such a moment ; it would have seemed too much like a triumph. ‘We can settle that next time I come,’ she answered, smiling ; I care for nothing now, but keeping Stephen and my donkey waiting in the cold ; give me one more kiss.’ The kiss was given, and Amy ran off quite happy, whilst Dora, though not equally light-hearted, felt as if a burden had been taken from her mind ; and after waiting for a few moments enjoying the unusual luxury of humility, she followed her cousin to see that she was carefully protected against the cold. Mrs Bridget came forward to offer her services, but Dora wished to do everything herself ; and Amy declared herself so comfortable, she thought her ride would be really enjoyable, notwithstanding the north wind. There was one disappointment, however, awaiting her. Stephen had been attacked by his old enemy, the gout, and was kept a prisoner to his cottage, so that she had no resource but her own thoughts, the man servant who attended, keeping at a distance, and only approaching to open the gates, move away the straggling boughs of the trees in the forest, or help to wrap the cloak more closely around her, when the keen blast, which seemed to meet them in every direction, blew with more than ordinary violence.

CHAPTER XII.

ON the day which Dora had named, Mrs Herbert and Amy were established at the Hall. Amy, in great delight, looked round upon the preparations that had been made for her

mamma's comfort ; and could not doubt, as she felt that some of her first wishes were realised in the prospect of spending so many days at Emmerton together, that Mrs Herbert would enjoy it equally with herself. And certainly, if luxury could constitute a person's happiness, there would have been nothing to desire. 'O mamma!' she said, drawing the easy chair close to the fire, 'there is everything we want here, just the same as at the cottage ; I can make you so comfortable when you are tired ; and you can lie down, and look out at that beautiful view. There is the spire of Emmerton church just in front ; it seems almost prettier now, when the snow is on the ground, than it was in the summer.'

'Your aunt has been very thoughtful,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'but I hope I shall feel well enough to be much with her ; only we can spend the morning together, just as if we were at home.'

'Yes,' said Amy ; 'and you will be able to see Miss Morton whenever you wish it ; and perhaps Margaret and Dora will come and sit with us sometimes. O mamma ! it will be so nice !'

'Look, Amy,' said Mrs Herbert, pointing to the well-filled book-shelves : 'there will be occupation for us both, when we have nothing else to do.'

Amy began examining the books with interest, and suddenly exclaimed, 'Mamma, it must be Dora who has made everything so comfortable for us ; here are all the books that I like best ; and I remember the last day I came to Emmerton she made me tell her the names of a great many, and I could not imagine why.'

'And these flowers, are they the result of Dora's care, do you think?' said Mrs Herbert ; 'she must have gathered all there were in the conservatory ; it is quite strange to see them when the snow is on the ground.'

'It must be Dora,' replied Amy ; 'I don't think aunt Harrington or Margaret ever even look at flowers. I never saw Margaret take one in her hand, except to pull it to pieces ; and there is Dora's own letter case, and the beautiful inkstand her uncle Henry gave her.'

'I wish Dora would come and see the pleasure she has given us,' said Mrs Herbert.

'I think she went away,' answered Amy, 'because she fancied you were tired, and would rather be alone with me at first ; for she begged I would come to her in the schoolroom when I left you.'

‘I should like to rest now,’ replied Mrs Herbert ; ‘so you may go and tell her how comfortable I am, and then, by and by, I will thank her myself.’

Amy quitted the room, and Mrs Herbert endeavoured to compose herself to sleep ; but her thoughts were too busy. Whatever might be Amy’s pleasure at coming to Emmerton, she could not, herself, entirely sympathise with it ; and yet, with her perfect freedom from selfishness, she would have imposed any restraint upon her own feelings rather than mar the enjoyment of her child. Dora’s thoughtfulness brought vividly to her remembrance the days of her childhood, when she and her sister Edith had delighted in attending to the comfort of others in a similar manner ; and visions of those sunny days passed before her, one after the other, recalling forms and faces, even voices and words, which had since been almost forgotten. A gentle knock at the door interrupted her reverie, and Mr Harrington begged for admittance. He came to see that everything had been provided for his sister’s comfort, and expressed great satisfaction at Dora’s care ; and then seating himself by her side, they enjoyed for the next half-hour the pleasure of talking together of their early days ; and notwithstanding the melancholy reflections which naturally arose from the conversation, the relief of his sympathy with her present feelings was so great, that Mrs Herbert felt more comforted and refreshed when he left her, than she could have been by any other means.

Amy, during this time, had found her way to the school-room, and expressed her gratitude to Dora in the warmest terms ; but the subject did not appear quite agreeable to her, for she turned it off quickly, though a close observer might have discovered, from the expression of her countenance, that she really felt extreme pleasure. Margaret welcomed her cousin most affectionately, as she always did when no one else was near to attract her attention ; but, by this time, Amy had learned the true value of her words and caresses, and withdrew herself as soon as possible, feeling that Dora’s coldness, even if it were real, was infinitely preferable to Margaret’s warmth.

‘I have been begging mamma to have all the stupid people together next week,’ said Dora, when Amy began inquiring what had been decided on since she was last there, ‘and she is almost inclined to do it ; if they would come on Monday, and stay till Thursday, it would not be so bad ; and if she would ask two or three more, I am sure we should get on better.’

'I will tell you who is coming on Saturday,' said Margaret ; 'somebody you will be delighted to see.'

'Me !' exclaimed Amy, in astonishment. 'Why, I don't know any one.'

'Oh ! but you do. What do you say to your friend, Mr Cunningham ?' Poor Amy looked very uncomfortable. 'Yes,' continued Margaret, laughing ; 'and you will have to talk to him all day long, for Lucy says he has taken such a fancy to you ; he declares you are the best-mannered little thing he ever met with ; and, you know, it is so rare a thing for him to see any one who is well mannered to him, that he will be sure to seize upon you all the time he is here.'

'And how long does he stay ?' asked Amy.

'As long as Lord Rochford does ; it will be a week at least.'

'You had better go back to the cottage, Amy,' said Dora ; 'there will be no comfort for you here. I can just imagine how Mr Cunningham will pet you, and talk to you, and how frightened you will look. If it were not for your annoyance, I should quite enjoy the thoughts of seeing you together.'

'One thing I like him for,' said Amy, 'he has so much good nature.'

'Yes,' replied Dora ; 'he seems to have taken so much, that there is none left for his sister ; and now, Amy, she will be worse than ever to you, for she hates you cordially, because her brother said, after you were gone, that he thought being with you would do her a great deal of good.'

'I don't see what business Mr Cunningham has to think anything of the kind,' said Margaret. 'I don't mean to be ill-natured, Amy ; but really the idea of your being of use to Miss Cunningham is rather too absurd.'

'I think so, too,' replied Amy ; 'but I dare say he was only in joke.'

'Oh no ! he was not ; he was quite sincere ; and he told Lucy that if the London plan came to anything, he hoped an arrangement would be made for you to be of the party.'

'And so Miss Cunningham is your enemy for life,' said Dora ; 'not that there is any fear of the London plan, for mamma is more strongly set against it than ever.'

'It is half your fault, Dora,' observed Margaret ; 'I am sure there would be less difficulty, if you were to say you liked it ; but you are always speaking against it, and lately, too, you have taken to upholding Emily Morton.'

'I don't see,' replied Dora, 'why I should say what is not true for any one, least of all for Miss Cunningham, who knows quite well how to do it for herself.' Amy looked vexed, and Dora's conscience immediately told her she was wrong. 'I don't mean to say,' she continued, 'that Lucy Cunningham tells stories exactly, but she often twists and turns things to suit her own purpose, and she can exaggerate without the smallest difficulty.'

'Lucy Cunningham is very much obliged to you for your opinion of her,' said Margaret, sharply; 'and I shall take care to tell her what a friend she has in you.'

'As you please; but she is not worth quarrelling about. I shall be quite glad when she is gone to London, and then we shall hear no more about her. I hate having nothing but Lucy Cunningham dinning into my ears from morning till night.'

'It is better than Emily Morton, at any rate,' said Margaret, with a half contemptuous glance at Amy. '*One* is a lady.'

'O Margaret!' exclaimed Amy, while the colour rushed to her face; 'you don't mean to say that Miss Morton is not a lady?'

'I mean that she is not half so much of a lady as Lucy Cunningham; of course she must be something like one, or mamma would not let her be with us.'

'But indeed, Margaret,' replied Amy, trying to speak calmly, 'I do think you must be wrong. I am sure if a stranger saw them together, they would say directly there was no comparison between them.'

'But what has that to do with it?' said Margaret. 'It cannot alter the case. Lucy Cunningham is the daughter of a nobleman.'

'Yes, but that is not everything.'

'And Emily Morton is a governess,' continued Margaret, in a decided tone, as if there could be no arguing against such a truth.

'Yes,' again repeated Amy; 'and yet, if Miss Cunningham were a princess, it would make no difference in my feelings.'

'Then your feelings must be wrong, and all the world would say the same.'

'I am sure Miss Morton is more of a lady, because she is so gentle and kind,' said Amy; 'and she always thinks of other people before herself, and never gets out of temper, and never boasts of anything.'

‘Well ! but those are virtues ; you talk so foolishly, Amy. Susan Reynolds or Morris may be all that, but they would not be at all the more ladies.’

‘No,’ said Dora, coming to Amy’s assistance ; ‘they would not be ladies, because they would still have clumsy, awkward ways of doing things, and of speaking.’

‘Of course, that is just what I was saying !’ exclaimed Margaret, triumphantly.

‘No ; but Margaret,’ persisted Amy, ‘indeed that is not what you were saying ; for I am sure Miss Cunningham is much more awkward than Miss Morton, and yet you say that all the world would consider her superior.’

‘So they would,’ replied Margaret.

Amy was silent for a few minutes ; at length she said, ‘Mamma told me one day that we ought not to think as the world thinks, because the world means generally a great many vain, silly persons.’

‘Then you would set up to be wiser and better than everybody else, I suppose,’ said Margaret.

Dora again interposed, for she thought she saw what her cousin meant. ‘Amy is right, I am sure ; it would be only silly people who would think so much more of Lucy Cunningham’s birth than of other things. Not all the rank in the world will make persons ladies and gentlemen without manners.’

‘But I mean something besides manners,’ said Amy ; ‘because, what I like in Miss Morton is not quite manner ; it is her being good that helps to make her a lady, I think.’

Dora laughed. ‘That is one of your strange notions, Amy. I believe you think, that what you call being good is to make a person everything—rich, and happy, and ladylike, and beautiful.’

‘No, not beautiful,’ replied Amy ; ‘and yet,’ she added, ‘I remember once going with mamma to see a poor woman who was very ill ; and she was almost ugly, till she began to talk, and thank mamma for being kind to her, and then her face quite changed ; and mamma told me it was her being so grateful and contented that made her look so nice.’

‘I do think, Amy, you will go out of your senses some day,’ said Margaret. ‘You talk so differently from every one else.’

‘Do I ? That is very strange ; for all the persons I care for tell me the same things.’

‘Does Emily Morton ?’ asked Dora.

‘Yes, whenever I am quite alone with her, and ask her about anything—grave things, I mean.’

‘Well, Amy,’ said Dora, I must say that you are the merriest grave girl I ever met with. I don’t think any one who heard you laugh would fancy you really so demure as you are.’

‘No one ever said I was grave, except you,’ answered Amy. ‘I am sure I don’t know what I am myself; but I must not stay here now, for I want so much to see Miss Morton, and then I must go back to mamma.’

‘Always Emily Morton,’ said Margaret, as Amy ran out of the room.

‘Always Lucy Cunningham,’ retorted Dora.

‘No more of that, pray, Dora. You know very well that the reason you laugh is because you are jealous of her being fonder of me than of you.’

‘Jealous! Me jealous of her! with her sandy hair and freckled——’ but here Dora stopped.

‘Well,’ exclaimed Margaret, who always felt a secret satisfaction at Miss Cunningham’s plain face, though she would not acknowledge it to herself; ‘I thought you professed not to care about beauty—to be sure, Lucy is not lovely.’

‘I do not wish to say anything more about her,’ said Dora; ‘for I generally get angry; only I would give something if she were not coming here on Saturday.’

Margaret had not time to reply before Dora was gone, for she had lately learned to distrust her powers of self-command, and to think silence preferable to argument. The next few days were spent by Amy in great enjoyment—everything went smoothly and pleasantly. Dora was thoughtful and kind, Margaret in good humour, her uncle affectionate, and her aunt seldom in her way; and, above all, Emily Morton was admitted to her mamma’s room, and from their long conversations, and Emily’s expressions of gratitude and interest, it was quite evident that she began to consider Mrs Herbert in the light of a real friend. Not that the conversations which passed between them were at all such as Amy imagined. There was very little said about Emmerton, still less about Mrs Harrington; but Mrs Herbert led Emily to talk of her father and mother, her aunt, her early home, and her childish days; and gave her some valuable advice as to the manner in which persons in her position should conduct themselves, without obliging her to make complaints, which considering her own near connec-

tion with Mrs Harrington, would have been awkward and wrong.

Amongst Amy's pleasures during this happy time, one of the greatest was a visit to the rectory with Miss Morton, on the afternoon preceding Christmas-day. Their reception was even more affectionate than usual; and as they walked home, the distance seemed only too short, whilst she listened to Emily's praises of the persons whom, next to her mamma, she most loved and venerated.

'To-morrow will be Christmas-day,' she said, as she lingered in Miss Morton's room on her return; 'and the next day Miss Cunningham will be here; so I suppose we shall not be able to get a walk to the rectory again, yet; but if you would tell me when you go out, that I may be with you if I can, I should be so very glad. You know I like you so much better than Miss Cunningham.'

'I doubt if Miss Cunningham is a favourite with any one but your cousin Margaret,' was the reply; 'but she has so much to spoil her, that I do not think we ought to be hard upon her.'

'It is so odd that you should pity her, as you always do,' said Amy. 'Now I should like so much to be her,—that is, not herself, but to be my own self, with her rank and fortune; and then I would get such a pretty little room for you, and you should come and live with me, if you would.'

'And do nothing all day but amuse myself?'

'No, not that. I know you never would bear to do nothing; but you should teach me music and drawing as you do now, and we might have Rose with us too—it would be so nice.'

'And it is so nice to teach you music and drawing, and to have Rose with me, and to live in a comfortable little room. You see, I have it all.'

'Ah, yes!' said Amy; 'but then there are some things, now—tiresome, dreadful things—which you never should have to bear if you lived with me. And I would love you so dearly, so very dearly.'

Miss Morton drew Amy more closely to her, and gave her one of those kisses which she had lately begun to value far more than words.

'I should grieve very much,' she said, 'if I did not think you loved me dearly now—there are but few left in the world who do.'

‘But you have mamma to love you besides,’ said Amy; ‘and Mrs Walton, I am sure she must be fond of you; and sometimes, perhaps, she will ask you to stay at the rectory; and mamma and I can go there too, and then there will be no one to interrupt. I am so glad Miss Cunningham does not know Mrs Walton.’

‘Perhaps, so am I too,’ said Emily, smiling; ‘but we must try and be agreeable to her on Saturday.’

‘Ah! Saturday,’ repeated Amy, sighing; ‘all my pleasure will be over then—real, quiet pleasure, I mean. On Monday the other people come, and Dora says, that as I am her cousin, I shall be expected to help to entertain them. But I never did entertain any one in my life; I don’t quite know what it means. I suppose it is talking and showing pictures; but one can’t do that all day.’

‘Your cousin Frank comes to-night,’ replied Emily, laughing; ‘and he is so merry, that he will take half the trouble off your hands.’

Amy’s face brightened. ‘I forgot that; but then they are girls—boys cannot entertain girls. I do think, if I had but a fairy’s wand, I should strike them all as they came into the house, and change them into boys, and set them to play at football and leapfrog, and all the trouble would be over. But I am not Dora; and if they are dull they will not complain of me.’

Susan Reynolds here interrupted them with a message from Mrs Herbert; and Amy left Miss Morton with her mind in an uncomfortable state, having forgotten the pleasure of her visit to the rectory, and thinking only of the difficulties of the next week, and of all the strange faces she was to see.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE morning of Christmas-day was in every respect as bright and beautiful as Amy could possibly have desired. The clear sky was unclouded, and its brilliant blue was rendered only the more lovely from its contrast with the leafless branches which were pencilled against it. The lawn glittered like a sheet of silver, and the dark hues of the holly and the laurel exhibited

in full perfection the richness of the crimson berries, and the delicacy of the pure hoar-frost with which they were covered. There was an elastic feeling in the air, which would have given strength and refreshment even to the weary watcher by the bed of sickness. All nature seemed to rejoice, and Amy awoke to rejoice also. Too young to have anxiety for the future, or sorrow for the past, she felt only that she was in the place she most delighted in, under the care of the mother whose only wish was for her happiness, and surrounded by all the means of enjoyment that wealth could give. True, the wealth was not her own; but it was, at that moment, entirely devoted to her comfort, and the present was too full of pleasure to leave any space for envy and discontent. Even the remembrance of her father could not check the gaiety of her spirit, for she had not yet learned to feel that 'hope deferred maketh the heart sick.' Every day brought with it the expectation of hearing from him; and when the expectation was disappointed, there was left in its stead, not the wretchedness of doubt, but the blessing of hope for the morrow.

Her first thought on that morning was given to her mother; the next to her cousin Frank. He had arrived late the night before, so late, that she had been only able to remark the mixture of delight at his return home, and sad recollection of the one missing, who ought to have welcomed him, which had been shown by all, and by none more than Dora; and Mrs Herbert, unwilling to be any restraint upon them, had sent Amy to bed, and soon after retired herself.

This had been rather disappointing; but Amy had satisfied herself that he seemed very lively, and was more like Margaret than Dora; and for any further knowledge she was obliged to wait in patience till the breakfast-hour. It was usual for her cousins to breakfast in the schoolroom with Miss Morton; but on Christmas-day there was an exception to almost every general rule, and they were all to be together, even Miss Morton being admitted as one of the party, although the little attention that was shown her, nothing indeed beyond the merest civility, made it an occasion of far more pain than pleasure.

Frank, when he appeared, was in the highest possible spirits, full of his school adventures, and the characters of his playfellows, and told several stories in the regular school-boy slang, which Amy could not at all understand; but his presence took off much of the stiffness and restraint which every one else seemed to feel

before Mrs Harrington; and she herself occasionally relaxed into something like a smile as she listened to his merry laugh. Amy had rather dreaded the society of a boy—she had never been accustomed to it, and imagined he must be boisterous and rude; but with all his spirits, Frank Harrington was still so gentlemanly that she soon felt at ease.

‘Will the carriage be wanted to go to church this morning?’ said Mr Harrington. ‘Amy, my dear, do you think your mamma will venture out this cold weather?’

Amy was afraid not; she had been to her mamma’s room, and had found her so tired and unwell, that it was most probable she would not come down-stairs till the middle of the day.

An expression of anxiety and disappointment came over Mr Harrington’s countenance. ‘That is bad news for Christmas-day,’ he said. ‘I would give a great deal, Amy, to procure your dear mamma such a bright colour as you have. I well remember the time when she would have walked to Emmerton church and back twice, and laughed at the notion of being tired afterwards.’

‘Every one in these days is grown weak and sickly,’ said Mrs Harrington, in her usual severe manner; ‘that is, if they are not so really, they fancy it.’

Amy thought this might be meant for her mamma; and she would certainly have said something in reply, but for the fear of being disrespectful.

Mr Harrington, however, had no such fear; and answered, that he should be very glad to believe Mrs Herbert’s illness imaginary, for it would take a most painful load off his mind.

‘But she is better, a great deal, than she was, uncle,’ said Amy; ‘she walked several times round the shrubbery at the cottage, the day before we came here, and did not seem at all tired afterwards.’

‘Several times round a shrubbery, Amy!’ exclaimed Frank; ‘why that must be a walk for a snail. What do you say to a walk of six miles and back before breakfast? I knew a boy who did it just to buy a new cricket-bat; and a fine scrape he got into when he was found out.’

Amy looked all proper surprise at such a wonderful feat; and Frank, delighted at finding a new auditor, kept her for the next quarter of an hour, repeating his most extraordinary adventures, with such spirit, that Amy at last began to think there would be

more amusement in being a boy, and going to a public school, than even in the possession of all the splendour which usually formed the subject of her day-dreams. The church bells prevented any further conversation, and she was glad to escape from Frank's merriment for the enjoyment of a quiet walk with Miss Morton, who had more than ordinary pleasure in being with her on this morning, from having felt so much alone in the midst of a family party. Christmas-day had never been to her what it is to many, for she had never known the happiness of having all her relations about her; but she could recollect the time when it was spent at home, with her father and mother, and she sighed now to think how little the blessing had then been valued.

Amy was walking with her cousins in the rectory garden, which adjoined the churchyard, when Mr Walton came to her, after the conclusion of the service, to inquire for her mamma.

'And your uncle, too, my dear,' he said, 'I want very much to see him; what can have become of him?'

'There he is,' said Amy, pointing to a group of persons standing by the gate; 'he is talking to Mr Dornford, and Frank is with him.'

'He must introduce Frank to me,' said Mr Walton. 'Besides, I have something particular to say to him. How did you tell me your mamma was to-day?'

'Very weak and poorly,' replied Amy; 'but she seemed better when I left her.'

'Ah!' said Mr Walton, half muttering to himself; 'I doubt if it will be right; it may only excite a false hope—there will be no harm in delay.'

'What?' exclaimed Amy, who just caught the last words, 'delay, did you say?—what delay?'

'Nothing, nothing,' answered Mr Walton, hastily. 'I wish your uncle would not make me delay here; he does not generally speak to any one when he leaves the church, but to-day he is having quite a conversation.'

Amy looked earnestly at Mr Walton, with the conviction that this was only said to distract her attention; and an indefinable feeling of mingled dread and curiosity took possession of her mind. But there was nothing to satisfy her. The expression of Mr Walton's countenance was cheerful as usual; and Amy, though very quick in perception, was not quite old enough to perceive a trace of thoughtfulness beneath it. She did notice, however, the

quick, impatient glances which he cast towards the churchyard gate, and the restlessness of his manner as he paced up and down the little walk leading to it, venting his uneasiness by kicking away the leaves and broken sticks lying in his path. In another person it would not have been remarkable; but she was so accustomed to see Mr Walton perfectly composed, that in an instant it awakened her attention. The parting words were at last said; Mr Dornford walked away; and Amy hoped that in a few minutes her curiosity might be set at rest. But she was disappointed. Mr Walton eagerly seized her uncle's arm, and drew him aside. A short conversation ensued; and then Mr Harrington called out that they had better not wait for him, but walk home alone, and he would follow. Amy really felt uneasy, and yet she could hardly tell why, but her mamma's constant anxiety had in some degree infected her; and anything like mystery immediately made her think of Colonel Herbert. Miss Morton listened to her fears with interest, and did her utmost to calm her mind, telling her that, in all probability, Mr Walton's business was something connected with his parish, and that it was unlikely, almost impossible, he could have heard anything from India; but she advised her not to mention her notions to her mamma till after her uncle's return, as it would only make her needlessly uncomfortable; and if there were anything to be told, she would not be kept long in suspense. Amy hearkened, and tried to believe; and had been so used to depend upon the opinions of others, as to be almost persuaded she had been fanciful without reason, while she readily promised to say nothing of her anxiety; but she could not recover her usual happy spirits; and when they reached Emmerton, instead of going immediately to Mrs Herbert's room, she petitioned Miss Morton to walk once more with her to the lodge gate, that they might see when her uncle arrived. He waited, however, so long, that Amy herself grew weary of watching, and was the first to propose returning to the house.

'You will be tired,' she said to Miss Morton, 'and then we shall not be able to go and see Mrs Walton this afternoon. You know, you promised you would, if you could manage it, because you did not like to wait behind after church; and I should be so sorry to miss it, for we always used to dine with her on Christmas-day; and she will be so vexed if she does not see either mamma or me.'

Miss Morton acknowledged herself cold, though not tired;

and, at any rate, it was useless to stand longer at the gate, for, after all, there might be nothing to hear; and Amy repeated for the twentieth time, that she did not really think there was anything, though, at the same instant, she ran a few steps down the road, just to look once more round the corner.

Mrs Herbert was dressed, and more comfortable, and had many questions to ask, as to whether Amy had had a pleasant walk, whether she had spoken to Mr Walton, and whether Mrs Walton found her rheumatism worse than usual; and Amy, seated by the window, endeavoured to answer them all, with her mind wandering to other things, when the sudden appearance of Mr Walton and her uncle, on the terrace below, made her stop short and exclaim, 'There they are, both of them. I think there must be something.'

The next moment brought her to recollection; but there was no retracting what had been said,—she was obliged to explain; and the change in her mother's countenance, and the subdued tremulousness of her voice, soon gave her reason to repent her incautiousness.

'This will not do,' said Mrs Herbert, endeavouring to command herself. 'Amy, my love, tell your uncle I should wish to speak to him immediately.'

The message was, however, unnecessary. Mr Harrington had seen Amy at the window, and now, pausing in his walk, begged to know if he might be allowed to come up. 'And Mr Walton is with me,' he added. 'May he come too?'

'Yes, directly,' was Amy's reply. Her mamma was just wishing to see them both; and in a few minutes their steps were heard along the gallery.

Mrs Herbert turned very pale; and Amy stood by her, kissing her forehead, and trying to soothe the agitation she had so inconsiderately excited.

'It is quite unnatural,' said Mr Walton, as he entered, 'to pay you a visit on Christmas-day;—a sad falling off from former times. I have been half quarrelling with Mr Harrington for not allowing you to adhere to the ancient fashion, and dine with us; but he declares I am very unreasonable.'

Mrs Herbert attempted to smile, but the effort was too great.

'You are feeling ill to-day, my dear Ellen?' said Mr Harrington, kindly, taking her hand.

'No, not ill,' replied Mrs Herbert, faintly; 'that is, not worse than usual, but anxious—very anxious. O Charles!'

she added, looking eagerly in her brother's face, as if wishing to read there all she longed to know, 'have you anything to tell me? In pity, do not keep me in suspense.'

The tone in which this was spoken prevented anything like further delay.

'It is nothing bad,' replied Mr Harrington; 'and yet it is not so decidedly good as to allow one to build upon it. Mr Walton has had a letter from a friend in India, in which he says, that the accounts of the war have been greatly exaggerated; for, in fact, there has been nothing more than an insurrection in one of the provinces, which is now quelled; and there was a report that Colonel Herbert had joined his regiment, which had been sent some way up the country.'

Mrs Herbert did not speak in answer; she drew one long breath, as if her mind had been relieved from a dreadful weight; a calm, sweet smile of deep happiness passed across her yet beautiful features; and then, covering her face with her hands, she silently blessed God for His great mercy. 'May I see the letter?' was the first question she asked when the effect of the intelligence had a little subsided.

Mr Walton produced it instantly, saying that he had brought it for the express purpose of showing it to her. 'Not,' he continued, 'that there is anything in it beyond what Mr Harrington has just told you. The circumstance is mentioned in the light careless way in which we all speak of things of no importance to ourselves, but which may, perhaps, affect even the lives of our fellow-creatures. My friend Campbell had no notion how deeply it would interest me.'

Mrs Herbert seized the letter, and read the sentences again and again; but, as Mr Walton had stated, there was nothing further to be gained from them, though every word was examined and weighed; as yet, it was only report; and with this Mrs Herbert was obliged to be contented. 'I see,' she said, looking at her brother, who was evidently wishing, yet afraid to speak, 'you are anxious lest I should build too much upon this; but I hope I shall not. Whatever trial may be in store, it would be almost cruel to deprive me of a few weeks of hope.'

'I am only afraid of the consequences of a disappointment,' replied Mr Harrington; 'but I cannot give sermons to any one, especially to you, so I shall leave you with Mr Walton; his advice will be much more efficacious than mine.'

'Here is a better sermon than any words!' said Mr Walton,

as he patted Amy's head, when her uncle was gone. 'For your child's sake, you will not, I am sure, allow either hope or fear to have too powerful an effect upon you. I do not think either of you is well fitted to bear any great excitement.'

Amy's countenance certainly showed that Mr Walton's words were true ; every tinge of colour had faded from her cheek, and her bright dark eyes were dimmed with tears, which she was using her utmost efforts to repress. She had been silent, for she felt too much for words ; her hope was far more certain than her mother's, since it had not been so often chilled by disappointment ; and the dreams of happiness which filled her mind were for the present without a cloud.

'Yes,' said Mrs Herbert, in reply to Mr Walton's observation, 'Amy is indeed a motive for every exertion ; it would be a hard thing to cause her anxiety for both her parents.'

Amy tried to speak ; and hardly understanding her own feelings, was almost ashamed to find that her tears were more ready than her smiles at this moment of happiness. 'Dear, dear mamma,' she exclaimed, 'we shall never be anxious now. And you think he will be here soon ?'

'We *hope* everything that is delightful,' said Mr Walton, 'but we do not *think certainly* about anything ; so, my dear child, you must be contented as yet to go on just as you have done for the last twelve months ; and you must let me talk a little to your mamma alone. I am sure she will never be able to reason calmly while that little earnest face of yours is before her.'

Amy felt slightly inclined to rebel, as it seemed almost wrong that she should be sent away from her mother at such a time ; but she had never been accustomed to dispute Mr Walton's wishes ; and left the room to make Miss Morton and Dora acquainted with the intelligence her mother had received.

Miss Morton's room was the first place she sought ; and the next quarter of an hour was spent in telling her of all that was to be done when Colonel Herbert returned,—how they were to talk, and ride, and walk, and the alterations that were to be made at the cottage, and the places he was to take her to see ; and Emily, though feeling that the foundation of all this happiness was insecure, could not make up her mind to check such simple, innocent hopes. The same things were again repeated to Dora in the schoolroom ; and Margaret would have had her share also, but the indifferent tone in which she said, 'Dear me !

how strange !' when informed of the tidings from India, quite chilled Amy's flow of spirits ; and she hastened away to find a more sympathising listener. Dora's interest in her cousin, and all that concerned her, had lately so much increased, that it was no effort to her to listen as long as Amy felt inclined to talk ; and she was sorry when Miss Morton appeared, to remind her of the intended walk to the rectory, and to ask whether she still wished to go.

'Oh yes !' said Amy, 'if mamma does not care about my leaving her. I do so long to see Mrs Walton now more than ever ; but I will just go to mamma's room and ask her.'

Mrs Herbert's conversation with Mr Walton had been long and engrossing ; and this, added to the previous excitement, had so fatigued her, that she was looking much worse than in the morning ; and Amy resolved at first not to mention the walk, and took up a book as if not wishing to go out. But Mrs Herbert never forgot the pleasures of others, and would not for an instant allow her to think of remaining at home, declaring that rest and solitude would be better than any society, and that it would be a much greater pleasure to hear an account of the visit on their return than to keep her by her side during the whole afternoon. Amy was only half-satisfied ; but it was in vain to say that it was only the thought of the morning, and she was very much pleased with her book, and should be quite happy in reading it. Mrs Herbert insisted, and she went.

Mrs Walton's disposition was more sanguine than her husband's. She had seen less of the world, and had heard and known less of its disappointments ; and her fondness for Mrs Herbert made her seize upon every prospect of comfort for her, so eagerly, that there was no fear of Amy's hopes being again damped by any warning ; and, perhaps, that hour's visit was as full of delight to her as it was to the happy child, who, seated at her feet, looked up with a face so innocent and gay, that it seemed impossible to dread lest any evil should be near to mar her enjoyment. There was also a charm to Mrs Walton in watching Miss Morton's interest in her little companion. She had a quick perception of character, and was peculiarly sensible of anything like selfishness of feeling ; and she had often observed that, when persons have suffered much themselves, they seem unable to enter into the pleasures of others. But affliction had produced a very different effect upon Emily Morton ; and now, though she had lost both her parents, had been obliged to

leave her home, and had no prospect for the future but one of painful dependence, she still smiled as cheerfully, and spoke as hopefully to Amy, as if no thought of the difference in their situations had ever crossed her mind.

‘You must take care of your dear mamma,’ were Mrs Walton’s parting words. ‘Colonel Herbert will look very blank if he returns to see the pale cheek she has now ; for his sake, tell her she must endeavour to get strong.’

Amy promised to be very watchful, and had no doubt that everything would be right. But Mrs Walton was not so well satisfied, and drew Miss Morton aside, to ask more particularly how Mrs Herbert had borne the intelligence. Miss Morton could give her little information, but undertook to send a note to the rectory in the evening to ease her mind ; though at the time the request was made Mrs Walton acknowledged that it was apparently absurd to be so anxious.

‘You would not wonder at it, however,’ she said, ‘if you knew all that Mrs Herbert has been to me for many years ; even during the lifetime of my own child, she was almost equally dear to me, and since that great loss, I have felt as if she were left to be my special treasure. I need not say to *you* that she is deserving of all, and more than all, the affection I can give.’

‘And her child is exactly similar to her,’ replied Miss Morton.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Walton ; ‘how could the child of such parents be different ? There is but one thing in which she does not resemble her mother—her disposition is naturally more lively and hopeful. It would require, probably, very much affliction to destroy the buoyancy of her spirits ; and I would willingly pray that many years may pass before she is so tried, unless it should be required for her good, for it would be a bitter thing to lose the sound of her merry laugh, and the brightness of her smile.’

‘It would make Emmerton very different to me,’ said Miss Morton. ‘As I have often told you, I could hardly have supposed before, how much interest and pleasure may be added to life by one so young ;—a mere child, as she really is, and yet with thoughtfulness and consideration which make me fancy her much older. My most earnest wish is, that Rose may one day be like her.’

Amy’s approach interrupted the conversation ; and Mrs Walton parted from Emily Morton with a warmer feeling of affection, from the entire correspondence of their feelings towards her.

The happiness of Amy's mind was a peculiar blessing at Emmerton on that day. It was Christmas-day; and every one knew that it was a time for especial enjoyment, though, perhaps, few of the party could have satisfactorily explained the reason why, and fewer still could have entered into the joy which none but a Christian can feel on the celebration of the Birth of their Redeemer. It was a duty to be cheerful, and yet almost every one had a secret grief which prevented them from being so. Mr and Mrs Harrington could not forget all that had passed within the last twelvemonth; and Dora and Frank sighed many times as they missed their favourite companion;—even Margaret, though she had suffered much less than the others when Edward died, could not be insensible to the change in the family, and wandered about the house complaining that it was not at all what Christmas-day used to be; but Amy had no such recollections to sadden her, and soon enlivened her cousins by the influence of her own gaiety, notwithstanding the shade which was occasionally cast over it, when Dora reminded her that by that time on the following day she would probably be occupied in trying to understand Mr Cunningham's unintelligible language.

CHAPTER XIV.

SATURDAY came, and with it the expected guests; and at a very awkward hour, just about twelve o'clock, when there was a long afternoon before them, with nothing to be done. Amy had made up her mind that they could not possibly arrive before four or five. It was some distance from Rochford Park to Emmerton; and she was sure there must be a great deal to do before they set off, and, in consequence, she had calculated upon seeing very little of either Mr or Miss Cunningham on that day. Her dismay, therefore, was extreme, as she watched from the gallery window, and saw the carriage slowly driving down the avenue. She was not, however, required to entertain them, for it was her duty to attend upon her mamma; and in the afternoon there was an engagement to walk with Miss Morton and Rose to Stephen's cottage, to inquire how he was getting on after his attack of gout, and carry him a new flannel-waistcoat, which Rose had taken great delight in helping to make. There was,

therefore, no fear, she thought, of seeing much of Miss Cunningham, except at dinner-time; and as for her brother, he would probably not come in the way at all. And having thus relieved her mind, Amy returned to her mamma's room, delighting more than ever in its quietness and privacy.

Mrs Herbert was still very unwell; she had passed a sleepless, anxious night, at one moment anticipating Colonel Herbert's return with the utmost confidence, and the next picturing to herself all the bitterness of disappointment; but she made many efforts against this distrust, and tried to feel, what she knew to be true, that whatever might happen, it would be for her good, and that she should be supported under it.

Miss Cunningham appeared in the schoolroom in all the splendour of her new winter dress, made after the last Parisian fashion, and, for the first time, regretted that Amy was not present to be overpowered by such magnificence. Dora was the only person there, and it was useless attempting to make an impression upon her; she had no eyes for anything belonging to Miss Cunningham; and her arrival at such an early hour was so unexpected and disagreeable, that it required some effort to be civil to her. 'We did not expect you till dinner-time,' she said, after the first greeting was over, in a tone which plainly meant, 'and we did not want you.'

'Oh!' replied Miss Cunningham, 'papa had some business in the neighbourhood, and so he insisted upon our setting off at eleven; and a great bore it was. I am sure Warren must have spoiled half my dresses by packing them in such a hurry. My new-worked muslin, I suspect, will be quite unwearable, and the French gray silk not much better; and as for the white silk, and the pink crape, and my morning dresses, I am quite unhappy about them. The only two which I feel at all sure of are the figured lilac satin, and the pale green poplin—those I saw her put in myself.'

The tone of pretended indifference in which this was spoken irritated Dora almost beyond endurance; perhaps the more so, because she was sensible of having been at times guilty of the same folly. 'I have no doubt the dresses will do very well,' she answered. 'A lady's-maid always understands how to pack; and if they should be injured, it will not signify, as far as the appearance goes, for there is no one coming here who will take the smallest notice of what you have on.'

Miss Cunningham looked and felt extremely mortified, and

evidently showed it by the tone in which she said, 'I thought you were going to have a large party, and a dance, and all sorts of things.'

'What a strange idea !' exclaimed Dora. 'What should we have a dance for ?'

'I thought everybody had dances when they asked their friends at Christmas,' said Miss Cunningham ; 'that is to say, we have been accustomed to it when we have visited people of our own rank in the county ; but I suppose it is not the custom amongst common people.'

'Perhaps not,' replied Dora. 'Of course, we can tell nothing about them ; but whether it is the custom or not, it would make no difference to us. Papa and mamma generally do as they choose, without caring about the rest of the world.'

'And will there be nobody, then ?' asked Miss Cunningham, with a sudden pang, as she thought of the green poplin, and the white silk, and the pink crape, wasting their splendour upon Mr and Mrs Harrington.

'Just a few people,' was the reply ; 'the young Dornfords, and their papa, and one or two others.'

'What, boys ! school-boys !' exclaimed Miss Cunningham, in horror ; and before Dora could answer, Margaret came into the room in particularly good spirits, and with a manner which formed a singular contrast to her sister's. The embraces were so fervent, the expressions of affection so warm, that a common observer might have supposed, with reason, that this was the first meeting after an absence of several years, between very dear friends, while Dora looked on with a curling lip, and a contracted brow, and a secret rejoicing that she was not in Margaret's place.

'When you have done kissing, Margaret,' she said, at length, 'perhaps you will just listen to me. Amy wishes to dine to-day at half-past one ; and mamma has no objection, and so it is to be.'

'Really, Dora,' replied Margaret, 'it is very rude to attend to Amy's wishes instead of Lucy's. I always thought relations were to be thought of last.'

'Amy wishes to dine at half-past one ; and mamma has no objection, and so it is to be,' repeated Dora, with a manner which she intended to be dignified, though it was only very cross.

'Don't mind her,' half whispered Margaret to Miss Cunning-

ham ; 'it is only her foolish way ; we need not dine earlier than we choose for Amy. It really is too absurd to think of giving up to her, and I shall speak to mamma about it.'

Dora pretended not to hear this speech, and left the room satisfied with having exhibited her authority and carelessness of Miss Cunningham's feelings, and dissatisfied, in her secret heart, by the consciousness of having been extremely unamiable. She met Amy on the stairs ; and the sight of her gay, innocent face, which seemed quite a reproach, had seldom been so unwelcome ; but it was impossible to vent any anger upon her, and hastily passing, Dora shut herself up in her own room ; while Amy, who had lately been quite unused to such a manner from her cousin, could only wonder in silence what had happened to discompose her.

Miss Cunningham, in the meantime, relieved from Dora's presence, felt no scruple in giving way to her expressions of dislike to Amy ; and, with great earnestness, endeavoured to inspire Margaret with similar feelings. It was so strange, so unusual—such a very great liberty, for a cousin to think of choosing what time every one else should dine ; really, she could not have imagined that Mrs Harrington would allow it ; but she had always observed that Amy Herbert was very much at her ease ; in a little time she would have everything her own way. 'Of course, I don't mean to speak against her,' she continued ; 'only I know a family just like yours, Margaret, where there was a cousin brought up, and at last her unclé and aunt really became fonder of her than they were of their own children.'

'There is no fear of that with mamma,' replied Margaret ; 'I am sure she does not care a straw for Amy. Papa is different. I do think, sometimes, he takes a good deal of notice of her ; but then, you know, she is not brought up with us ; she is only here on a visit.'

'That does not make any difference ; I am quite sure, if you do not take care she will stand in your way in everything. Papa said, the other day, that he thought Mrs Harrington would have consented to our going to London, only she remembered your cousin ; and then she declared, as she should feel obliged to take her, the plan would not do.'

Margaret's vexation was very great, yet she could not entirely enter into her companion's antipathy ; she had felt too much the charm of Amy's sweet temper and obliging disposition to

be able cordially to abuse her. But Miss Cunningham loved the sound of her own voice too well to require an answer ; and the expression of her own likings and dislikings was all that was important to her. ‘George provokes me so,’ she said, ‘he does nothing, now, but lecture me from morning till night, and wish I was like her. Really, I think he might find some one my own equal in rank for me to imitate, if he is so dissatisfied. I told him, as we were coming here, that if he said anything about her being with us in London, I would not go till next year ; and I may have quite my own way about it, so I have put a stop to that.’

Margaret was annoyed, though she did not like to appear so. Miss Cunningham’s superior age and rank kept her always considerably in awe ; but she was painfully struck by the want of ladylike feeling, which had induced her friend to speak in such terms of so near a relation.

Miss Cunningham, however, could never discover when she had said or done anything amiss. From her childhood her perception on such subjects had been singularly obtuse ; and nothing in her education had served to quicken her knowledge of character ; she went on, therefore, in the same tone, with the full impression that all her observations must be agreeable. ‘Dora tells me that there is no one invited here but a parcel of school-boys and girls ; and really, I must say, it was hardly worth while to come six miles this cold weather merely for them—of course, I thought there was to be a dance.’

Margaret endeavoured to explain her sister’s statement. There were to be some boys, certainly, as companions for Frank—but there were to be other people besides ; and, indeed, her mamma had sent out some more notes only this morning, because Dora said that she would rather have a great many to entertain than a few.

‘Then there will be a dance,’ said Miss Cunningham. ‘How are you to amuse yourselves else?’

‘It would be very nice,’ replied Margaret ; ‘but I don’t quite think papa and mamma have any notion of it. You know Christmas is not now what it was last year, when Edward was alive.’

‘Oh yes ; to be sure—I know all that. Of course, you were all very miserable, and cried a great deal at the time. I remember I was dreadfully wretched when my little brother William died. Indeed, mamma said she never knew any one

with such strong feelings in her life. But, then, it is all past now ; and it is right to be cheerful, and try and forget it.'

'I wish you would ask mamma,' said Margaret. 'She would listen to you, at any rate ; and she could not be angry at any proposal from you. It certainly would be a good way of amusing them.'

'I don't mind, in the least, asking,' answered Miss Cunningham. 'I never did mind it, from a child. Mamma says it surprises her to see how little of the stupid shyness I have, which makes other girls so disagreeable. Let me see,—I shall wear my white silk, I think ; there is a blonde fall to go with it, which makes it look beautiful. That or the pink crape. Pink suits my complexion best ; but then it is not quite so dressy. There is a picture of some great lady in the saloon at Rochford, which papa says is just like me in my pink crape. Mary Queen of Scots, I think it is, or Queen Elizabeth—I don't know which ; only it is a queen of some kind. What shall you wear ?'

'Oh !' said Margaret, sadly, 'you know we are not yet out of mourning, so we can have nothing but white ; only I wish mamma would give us new dresses.'

'Of course she will. You can't possibly have a dance without a new dress ; nobody ever heard of such a thing. My white silk is quite new ; and the pink crape I only put on one evening for papa to see. We shall dance, I suppose, in the hall. And how many persons do you think there will be ?'

Margaret had some difficulty in following the swiftness of her companion's imagination. It was very delightful to picture the hall, brilliantly lighted up and filled with company, and herself exciting every one's admiration by the side of her plain friend. But then came another idea, not quite so agreeable,—Mrs Harrington's stern features and look of surprise, when the plan should be first proposed. Margaret trembled as she thought of it ; and, but for Miss Cunningham's unshrinking courage, the wish for the ball would soon have passed away. When a fancy, however, takes possession of a weak, selfish mind, there is but little room left for any other consideration. Miss Cunningham's mind was of this description ; it was seldom capable of retaining more than one idea at a time, and whatever that might be, it was all-engrossing. A little while ago, the journey to London had occupied every thought ; now, her only wish was, that a dance should be given at Emmerton ; and she was so firmly resolved

that it must take place, that every obstacle, every notion of propriety, sank into nothing.

Margaret listened, and wondered, and wished, and at last ended in agreeing that a dance was quite necessary for their happiness, and for the happiness of each of the other members of the family, Mrs Harrington included ; and that the only way to manage it was for Miss Cunningham to talk to her mamma about it that very day.

The first thing that startled Margaret from her new dream of enjoyment was Dora's look of astonishment when informed at dinner of their intentions. 'Do you really mean,' she said, turning to Miss Cunningham, 'that you are going to tell mamma we ought to have a dance this Christmas?'

'Yes,' was the reply. 'I half thought of talking to papa about it first ; but he might make some objection ; and George might say no—so it is best to go at once to Mrs Harrington.'

'And do you recommend Miss Cunningham to do it?' asked Dora, looking at her sister.

'Yes, why should I not?' said Margaret, half frightened. 'Do you think mamma will be angry?'

'Try, that is all,' replied Dora.

'Perhaps,' said Miss Morton, 'Miss Cunningham is not quite aware of the painful circumstances which might make Mrs Harrington unwilling, at this time, to give so large a party.'

Miss Cunningham looked, in answer, astonished at hearing such an observation from Emily Morton in her presence. She did not, however, think the remark worthy of reply in words, and continued her account of what she thought ought to be done, and then again repeated her intentions with regard to her dress, ending by saying to Amy, 'I suppose you have a white muslin ; that will be well enough, as you are such a child.'

Dora's amazement at Miss Cunningham's boldness was so great that she made no attempt to prevent her following her own inclinations ; besides, she rather enjoyed the thought of her being put down by Mrs Harrington, and therefore ate her dinner in dignified silence ; whilst Amy, whose astonishment was not less than her cousin's, felt she had no right to interfere, though she did hope something would be said to induce Miss Cunningham to refrain from taking so great a liberty.

But, perhaps, Margaret was the person who felt most uncomfortable. At first the notion of a dance had been so agreeable that every objection was overlooked ; but Dora's manner had

recalled her to herself, and she began heartily to wish that the thing had never been mentioned ; for if her mamma were spoken to, her name was sure to be brought forward ; and when dinner was over, she endeavoured most anxiously to inspire her friend with a little awe, by hinting at her own fears, and Mrs Harrington's particularities. But she hinted in vain. Nothing but the plainest meaning in the plainest language could ever be understood by Miss Cunningham ; and Margaret was at last obliged to beg that she would speak to her papa, and get the plan suggested by him.

Dora was in the room whilst this was passing, and still secretly desired that the original intention might be persisted in ; and at first there appeared every probability of it ; for Miss Cunningham stared, pouted, and seemed quite puzzled at the idea that anything she could say could be taken amiss. However, if Margaret were really silly enough to be afraid about such a trifle, she would do as she wished, but merely to please her ; she only rejoiced that she was not kept in such leading-strings herself.

‘ It would be a good thing if you were,’ muttered Dora, as she sat by the window, looking with a careless eye upon the quiet, wintry beauty of the garden.

It would have appeared lovely and peaceful had the tone of her mind been the same ; but the contrast was too great to please her. The bright sky brought no cheerfulness to a heart discontented with itself ; it only caused a sigh for the vanished pleasures of the summer ; and the white frost, which still hung on the evergreens, called forth nothing but an exclamation against the miserable cold weather, and the desolation, wretchedness, and dulness of everything and everybody in the month of December. Amy was gone for her walk with Miss Morton ; Frank had set out for a ramble with his papa ; they were stupid and disagreeable, and to be pardoned for leaving her behind, after she had refused the entreaties of both to go with them, only when they were compared with Margaret and Miss Cunningham, who was at that moment more unendurable than ever. She really could not remain any longer listening to her never-ending chattering ; and in the most desperate fit of ill-humour, with which she had been afflicted for weeks, Dora put on her bonnet and cloak, and sallied forth for a solitary walk. In which direction to go she was undecided ; the shrubbery was dull, the hill was cold, the park not fit for a winter's walk, and the terrace far too near the house to be agreeable ; and, as a last resource, she determined

on finding her way to Stephen's cottage, in the hope of meeting Amy, though she had never before taken the trouble to visit it.

The path led along the side of the hill, which was covered by the Emmerton plantations, and then emerged into some open fields, through one of which flowed the deep, rapid stream, which at Emmerton almost expanded into a lake. A wooden bridge across the water, and a narrow lane, then led to Stephen's cottage, which stood alone in its small, neat garden, showing, even in winter, symptoms of the care and taste bestowed upon it. The beauty of the walk was, however, wholly lost upon Dora; she only felt that it was very cold, and would have returned home could anything have been found within doors at all more alluring than the severity of the weather without. The sound of approaching voices first roused her from her discontented reverie; and, as she looked hastily round, she perceived her papa and Frank coming down the hill.

Mr Harrington expressed surprise at finding her alone so far from the house, and objected to her proceeding farther, laying some blame on Miss Morton for not having accompanied her. Dora's ill-humour did not interfere with her usual quick sense of justice; and lately she had become peculiarly sensible to the habit which prevailed at Emmerton, of making Miss Morton bear the burden of other people's faults; perhaps, too, some compunction for having occasionally been guilty of the same offence, though not in an equal degree, made her now very desirous of explaining the truth. Mr Harrington was easily satisfied; he had rather an interest in Miss Morton; she was so quiet and unobtrusive and lady-like, and never troubled him with complaints; but he insisted upon Frank's accompanying his sister, if she still wished to go farther; and though Dora declared there was no doubt of meeting Miss Morton in a few minutes, he would not hear of her being left alone—and Frank, much against his inclination, was obliged to remain.

CHAPTER XV.

‘WE had better go at once to the cottage, Frank,’ said Dora, when her father was gone; ‘we shall be sure to find them there; and I dare say they have been kept longer than they intended, talking to old Stephen.’

‘And who is Stephen?’ said Frank.

‘Oh! I am sure, I don’t know,’ replied Dora; ‘only an old sort of servant of grandpapa’s, who always has the gout. He was steward, I believe, once. I never trouble my head much about him; but Amy talks a good deal of him.’

‘And what makes you go and see him, then?’ said Frank.

‘Nothing at all, but because I wanted something to do, and Amy and Miss Morton were gone, and I could not bear staying at home with Miss Cunningham.’

‘How you sigh! Dora,’ said Frank; ‘and how grave you look. I don’t think you have laughed heartily once since I came home.’

‘There is nothing to make one laugh that I can see,’ said Dora, ‘in this gloomy old place, and the dull, cold weather.’

‘We were never dull at Wayland,’ replied Frank; ‘and the weather was much worse there last winter than it is now.’

‘Well, I don’t know what it is,’ said Dora; ‘but everybody is grown so cross here, there is no bearing it; and it is not at all like Christmas time.’

‘Wait till Monday,’ answered Frank; ‘we shall be merry enough then; the young Dornfords are coming here quite early, that we may have some skating on the lake.’

‘Young Dornfords, indeed!’ exclaimed Dora; ‘what good will that be to me? I shall not skate.’

‘But you used to like watching us,’ said Frank, in a disappointed tone.

‘Times are changed,’ answered Dora, shortly; ‘I shall not like it now.’

Frank turned away from his sister, and walked some paces off, thinking all the time how disagreeable she was, and how much pleasanter the walk home with his papa would have been. His own disposition was so happy, that he could neither understand nor endure one which was the reverse, and Dora’s age and character made him always feel rather in awe; so that he could not tell her, what he saw was the fact, that the fault of everything lay in herself, and her own discontent. Silently and sulkily Dora walked on to the cottage; as they passed the window, she had a full view of what was going on within—and as she looked, her feeling of dissatisfaction increased. The room was small, but extremely neat, and ornamented with a few prints and pictures, and some wooden shelves, on which were ranged all Stephen’s most valuable treasures—a large Bible, in two volumes, which

had descended to him from his grandfather, 'The Whole Duty of Man,' given him by Mrs Herbert's mother, and several other books of a similar kind—all presents from different members of the family ; some curious old cups and saucers, presents likewise, a wooden knife, made from the horn of the first buck which he had seen killed, the handle of the first whip he had used when he became coachman at Emmerton, and, above all, the leading rein with which he had taught all the young gentlemen and ladies to ride. There was a story attached to each of these relics—and Amy, though she had heard them a hundred times, still listened with pleasure as they were repeated again and again ; and when Dora looked, she saw her seated on a low stool by Stephen's side, with her hand resting on his knee, while he was explaining to Miss Morton how nearly Mr Harrington had met with a serious accident when he first mounted his Shetland pony. There was poverty in the cottage (or what at least seemed such to Dora), and sickness, and pain, for Stephen had been very ill, and was even then suffering considerably ; and yet she could not look upon it without something like a feeling of envy. Stephen was resigned to his illness, and grateful for its alleviation. Amy had forgotten herself entirely, and was watching with delight the interest Emily Morton took in hearing her old friend talk ; and Emily was thinking of the many blessings which God has granted to soften the trials of life, and was learning a lesson of cheerful resignation, which none but herself would have imagined she required. Dora was young, and she had never been taught to think ; but there was something in the general appearance of the cottage, and in the expression of the old man's countenance, which spoke more forcibly than any words. She had youth, health, and riches ; he had age, sickness, and poverty—how was it that he could smile while she sighed, that he could be grateful when she was discontented ? She did not put the question into words, but the feeling was so painful that she could not wait to think about it, and hastily knocking at the door, hardly awaited for an answer before she entered. Amy uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, and Stephen half rose from his seat to do honour to his unexpected visitor.

'I hardly thought ever to have seen you here, Miss Harrington,' he said, trying to be cordial, and yet not able entirely to conceal his sense of the neglect which he had experienced. "'Tis so long since the master came back to the Hall, and none of you young ladies have found your way here before, that I

began to think it wasn't the fashion now to go about as it used to be.'

'Oh! I don't know,' replied Dora, who would willingly have been indifferent to the reproof which she felt was implied; 'your cottage is so far off, Stephen, and the days are getting so short.'

'So they are, so they are,' answered Stephen; ''tis all very true, Miss Harrington; but somehow in the old times people did not think about far off and short days;—not that I mean to complain; for you know the Bible tells us we are not to ask "why the former days were better than these."'

'Here is my brother come to see you, too,' said Dora, turning to the door to look for Frank, who had lingered on the outside. 'You cannot find fault with him, for he only arrived on Thursday.'

'Master Frank!' exclaimed the old man, while his clear, gray eyes were lighted up with an unusual expression of pleasure; 'but you don't mean he is here, only coming?'

'No, not coming,' said Amy; 'really here; I saw him just now.'

Stephen tried to move from his chair in his impatience to ascertain if her words were true; but he was not able to walk without assistance, and sank back again with a half-uttered expression of regret, which made him the next instant murmur to himself, ''Tis God's will; and 'tis fit we should learn to bear it.'

'Here he is, really!' exclaimed Amy, as Dora re-entered the cottage, followed by Frank. 'I am sure, Stephen, you did not quite believe us.'

Stephen only answered by taking Frank's hand in his, while, for a few moments, he fixed a deep, earnest gaze upon every feature of his countenance.

'Yes, it's like, very like,' at length he said, in a low voice, as if speaking to himself; 'like his mother, like all her family; but I could have loved it better if it had been different.'

'O Stephen!' exclaimed Amy, who had caught the words, notwithstanding the tone in which they were spoken, 'if you say so, Frank will think you are not glad to see him.'

'No,' replied Stephen, 'there was never one of the name of Harrington that could think that yet, Miss Amy. The young gentleman will learn soon enough that it does my very heart good to look at him; but 'tis natural for an old man to think most of

them that are gone—and, somehow, 'twas a foolish fancy, but I thought that maybe he might have his father's face too ; but he hasn't not half so much as the young lady there ; and she must be like Master Edward, for the people at the Hall tell me he was the very image of the master.'

Dora had moved to the window on the first allusion to her brother, but, struck with Stephen's manner, she now came forward, and said, 'Do you remember what any of us were like, Stephen, when we left Emmerton ?'

'Remember !' repeated the old man. 'Who wouldn't remember those who were as his own children ? Ah ! Miss Harrington, 'twas a sad day when the master told me he was going ; but 'twould have been still more sad if I had known that there was one who was never to return.'

Dora tried to restrain the tears which glistened in her eyes ; and again she would have turned away, but Stephen prevented her. 'And did you love him then so much ?' he said, earnestly, forgetting, at the sight of her distress, the neglect and indifference which he had so much felt. 'Ah ! 'twas right and natural, for he was the flower of all ; and bitter it must have been to lose him, for 'twas your first sorrow ; but if God should spare you to live as many years as I have done, Miss Harrington, you will learn, when you lay your treasures in the cold earth, to thank God for taking them out of a sinful world.'

'It is hard for Miss Harrington to think so now, Stephen,' said Miss Morton, fearing lest his words and manner might increase Dora's grief. 'At her age there is so much to hope for, that it is impossible to expect it.'

'And I don't expect it,' said Stephen ; 'I only tell her so now, that she may think of my words when I am gone ; and I know that they are true, for I have felt it. I had four once, and I loved them all as my own life. The master himself and the family were not nearer to me, nor so near as they were ; and when the first of them was carried to his grave, I thought that my heart would have broke ; but God gave me to think better afterwards, for He sent me many a hard trial ; and so, when my spirit was turned in a manner from the earth, He called for all the rest, one after another ; and I watched them till the hour of their death, and heard that their trust was in Him ; and then I laid them to their rest, and blessed Him for His mercy, for I knew that sickness and sorrow might knock at my door, but they could never knock at theirs.'

There was a moment's pause after the old steward had spoken, for none but Miss Morton entirely understood his meaning—even Amy, though she had often heard him talk in the same way before, thought it strange ; and she stood looking in his face, and wondering whether it could be possible for herself or her cousins ever to feel like him. Stephen smiled as he watched the expression of her countenance. 'You don't half believe me, Miss Amy,' he said, 'any more than I believed you when you said the young gentleman was come to see me ; and, perhaps, 'tis as well you don't ; only 'tis fit for us all to think betimes that we are not to stay here for ever, and to expect to find things hard as we grow old ; for so we learn to look above, and then it may be God may see good to spare us a long trial, and call us early to Himself.'

'To die !' exclaimed Amy, in a half-frightened tone.

'It sounds hard,' said Stephen ; 'and yet God only knows how great a blessing it may be. But you need not look so sad, Miss Amy, the time may be very far off ; and, when it comes, you may have learned to think like me ; and there may be many a happy day in store for you all, only it may be near too,—aye, near even to that little one there, who looks as if she had never known what sickness was.'

Amy looked at Rose ; and certainly it did seem more difficult than ever to believe the truth of Stephen's words. She had left the rest of the party, not caring for what was passing, and was standing by the door, amusing herself with the antics of a young kitten, as it tried to catch the piece of cork which she held just out of its reach. Her bonnet had fallen back, and her bright, chestnut hair hung in clustering ringlets about her neck ; the glow of health and happiness was on her cheek, and her dark eyes sparkled with delight, and her little hands were clapped in ecstasy at every fresh movement of the kitten ; and, as Stephen spoke, she burst into a merry laugh, when the tiny animal, showing unusual agility, seized upon the cork, and, to her great surprise, carried it off in triumph.

'You will make us all melancholy, Stephen,' said Miss Morton, as she watched the thoughtful expression of Dora's face. 'My little pet has never known an hour's real illness from the day of her birth, so we will not begin fearing for her now.'

'No, not fear,' replied Stephen ; 'only,' he added, in a lower tone, 'tis an angel's face ; and at times I have thought that it was fitter for heaven than for earth. But I didn't mean,' he continued, aloud, 'to talk about such grave things just the first day

of the young gentleman's visit. It isn't my way, Master Frank, in general, and so you shall know if you will come and see me again ; and please God I get strong upon my legs, I shall hope to show you a good many things I've got together down here. There's the goats, that are as tame as children, and the old hunter that's been turned out to grass for these half-dozen years,—there isn't such another beauty in all the country round ; and then there are the ponies that I had brought from the hills to train for the young ladies,—maybe you'd like to see them now ; my grand-daughter will show you where they are.'

Frank, who had felt strange and uncomfortable during the last quarter of an hour, gladly seized upon the idea, and the whole party immediately proceeded to inspect the ponies, followed by Stephen's lamentations that he could not exhibit them himself. Frank was just beginning to fancy he understood the merits and demerits of horses, and therefore examined them with a critical eye, and with every wish to show his knowledge by finding fault ; but there was very little to be said against them—in colour and shape, they were almost perfect of their kind ; and Frank's admiration, and Dora's earnest entreaties that they might be sent immediately to the Hall to be tried, soon recompensed Stephen for the disappointment he had at first felt respecting them. 'To be sure, they are very well,' was his reply to Amy's question, if he did not think them more beautiful than any he had ever seen before ; 'but they don't come up to the old ones, Miss Amy. There was the chestnut, that your own mamma used to ride when she was no bigger than you ; *that* was worth looking at ; not but what these are very well,—very well, indeed, for those who never saw any better.'

'Ah ! Stephen, that is so tiresome of you,' exclaimed Amy, half laughing and half vexed ; 'you always will bring up something or other to make one discontented ; you never can think that anything now is as good as it used to be.'

'Well, so it is,' said Stephen ; 'and when you come to my age, Miss Amy, you'll feel the same ; not but what there is one thing which I like better now than all, and that's your own dear little merry face ; 'tis always a comfort to look at it ; and in the old times I didn't want comfort as I do now.'

'And Dora, and Frank, and Margaret, will all come and see you now,' said Amy, 'and Miss Morton and Rose too. You will have so many visitors, Stephen, I am afraid you will get tired of them.'

'They'll be welcome—all welcome, at all hours,' answered Stephen, 'any of the family; and if, please God, the Colonel should come back, as they say he will, why I think I shall begin my life over again,—'twill all seem so old and natural.'

Amy's eyes brightened at the idea. 'I want some one to tell me how long it will be before he can be here,' she said, 'that I may count the days; but they all say it is uncertain, and I must not think about it; but I do think about it all day long, and so does mamma, though she does not say much.'

'Twill be a blessed day,' said Stephen, 'when it does come; and if it please God, I pray that I may live to see it. Sometimes I have thought I could die more happy if I could see young madam smile as she used to do.'

'Well, Stephen,' interrupted Frank, who was becoming impatient, 'you will send the ponies up the first thing to-morrow, won't you? No, not to-morrow though; to-morrow is Sunday; let them come up to-night.'

'Why, Frank,' said Dora, 'what good can that do? Monday morning will be quite early enough; you cannot possibly try them before.'

'But 'tis his wish, Miss Harrington,' said Stephen, 'and 'tis the first thing he has asked of me; so, if there's no offence to you, 'twould be a pleasure to me to have them up at the Hall to-night, and one of the grooms can quite easily come to fetch them.'

Frank's smile spoke his thanks; and Dora, pleased at anything which made his holidays happier than she had feared they would be, took a most cordial leave of Stephen, and left his cottage in a much better mood than she had entered it.

'I think,' she said to Amy, as they walked home, 'that there must be something very pleasant in going to visit poor people when they are comfortably off, like Stephen; they must be so glad to see one, and there is nothing to make one melancholy; but I can't say I should like getting into those dirty holes which some people have such a fancy for.'

'O Dora!' exclaimed Amy, 'I can't think any one really likes dirty holes, as you call them; but, you know, if no one were to look after them, there would be nothing done for the people who live in them.'

'But why do they live there?' said Dora; 'why don't they have neat cottages like Stephen's, and look cheerful and be grateful for what is given them? I have heard people say that it is

all their own fault being so miserably off, and that there is no good in doing anything for them.'

'Only,' replied Amy, 'a good many people have no work, and then of course they have nothing to live on.'

'How do you know?' asked Dora; 'do you ever go and see any of them but Stephen?'

'Oh dear, yes!' replied Amy, in a tone of surprise; 'all the people in the village I know quite well; mamma always takes me with her to their cottages.'

'And does aunt Herbert like going?' said Dora.

'Yes, very much, except when she is tired and ill; but she goes just the same; and they are so fond of her.'

Dora looked thoughtful, and said that it must be a great deal of trouble.

'Sometimes it is,' said Amy; 'but mamma always seems better when she comes back.'

'There is not anything done for rich people when they are unhappy,' said Dora; 'no one thinks of trying to give them pleasure.'

'Do you think that is quite the case?' asked Miss Morton. 'I should have said that there was care and kindness shown to every one every day of their lives.'

'Not to me,' said Dora, 'excepting, of course, from papa and mamma.'

'I fear,' said Miss Morton, 'we should be very badly off if our parents' care were all that we had to depend on.'

'I know what you mean,' replied Dora, thinking for a moment; 'but then the blessings which God sends are so different from the trouble which people say rich persons ought to take about the poor. Of course, He can do everything.'

'Yes,' said Miss Morton; 'and when we think of His infinite power, we can hardly imagine that His actions can be any example for us; but there was a time when He condescended to live upon the earth; and we do not find then that He shrunk from taking trouble, as we call it, to do good.'

Dora was silent and uncomfortable; she was beginning to get a faint notion of the extent of her duties, and of the care and thought which she ought to bestow upon her fellow-creatures as well as herself; and she turned from the idea in something like despair, fearing that it would be quite useless to attempt fulfilling them.

Amy watched her, and saw that something was amiss; and

leaving Miss Morton, she went to the other side, and put her hand within her cousin's without speaking.

The action was understood ; and again Dora felt self-reproach, as she noticed the gentle consideration of one so young, and thought of her own pride and selfishness. 'I should like to go with you some day,' she said, 'when aunt Herbert takes you amongst the cottagers, just to know what you say to them, and how you behave.'

'I never say anything,' replied Amy, 'except, perhaps, just to ask them if they are better ; but I like hearing mamma talk to them.'

'But there can be nothing said that you can care about,' observed Dora.

'Yes, indeed, there is, generally,' answered Amy. 'I like to hear about all their children, and I like to hear them tell mamma about their being ill and poor. I don't mean that I wish them to be ill and poor, but it is very nice to see how mamma comforts them, and it gives me pleasure to hear her talk to Mr Walton about them ; and when I go home, the cottage always seems so much larger and more comfortable than it did before. I never wish then that we had a larger house and more servants.'

'And do you ever wish so now ?' asked Dora.

Amy blushed, but answered without hesitation : 'I am afraid I do wish it very often ; but I know it is so wrong that it makes me very unhappy.'

'Wrong !' exclaimed Dora ; 'how can it be wrong ? Every one in the world wishes for something or another ; not that you would be one bit better off, Amy, if you were to live at Emmerton to-morrow ; at least, I think you are much happier than I am.'

'Mamma says the same,' replied Amy, 'and of course she knows best ; only it does not seem so—but I know it is wicked in me to indulge such feelings.'

'That is so silly,' said Dora ; 'how can it be wicked when everybody has them ? Don't you think now, Emily, that every one wishes for something better than what they possess ?'

'Yes,' replied Miss Morton, 'but some persons wish for things that are right and good, and others for those which are wrong, and this makes all the difference.'

'There can be no harm in houses and servants,' said Dora.

'Only,' said Miss Morton, 'that they are apt to make us think

proudly of ourselves, and despise those who are without them ; and that at our baptism we promised to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world.'

'Then what would you have people think of and long for?' asked Dora.

Amy looked at her cousin with a slight feeling of surprise at the question ; but Miss Morton did not appear to consider it strange, for she answered immediately : 'I think if persons were quite good as they ought to be, all their wishes would be for the blessings which are promised us in the Bible, and that they would care no more for earthly grandeur than a person who is passing through a foreign country does for what he may see there, when he has much better things at home.'

'What,' exclaimed Dora, 'not think about having comfortable houses, and pretty places, and plenty of money ! we might just as well all be poor at once.'

'Perhaps,' said Miss Morton, 'you may remember a verse in the New Testament, which says that the poor are blessed. It is very hard to believe, but if the Bible tells us so, it must be true.'

'That is just what mamma would say,' observed Amy ; 'but I don't think I quite like to hear grown-up people talk so, because I am sure it is right to think it ; and yet it seems quite impossible, and as if it would make one always melancholy ; only you are not melancholy,' she added, looking at Miss Morton.

'It would not be possible for any one at your age to feel like a grown-up person who has had a great many trials,' replied Emily ; 'but it is quite right for you to try at once to overcome your longing for grandeur and riches, because it is one of the lessons which we are sent into the world to learn, and one of the best ways of learning it, is by doing what Miss Harrington mentioned just now,—going amongst poor people, I mean.'

'I don't see what that has to do with it,' said Dora.

'If the poor people we visit are happy,' replied Emily, 'we shall see that God has given them pleasures quite independent of those we value so much, and we shall learn to think them of less importance ; and if they are unhappy, we shall thank God for having placed us in a different situation ; and whatever may be our trials, we shall bear them with far greater patience, when we see what the poor are forced to endure. A visit to a sick person, in want, will often do more to make us contented and grateful than all the sermons that ever were preached.'

‘Do you really think so?’ said Dora, gravely; ‘I wonder whether it would make me happier.’

‘Will you try?’ asked Miss Morton, eagerly. ‘Will you, if Mrs Harrington has no objection, go with me some day, and see the poor people? Mr Walton has often said he wished you would.’

‘O Dora! do go,’ exclaimed Amy; ‘I should be so delighted if you knew them all, as mamma and I do.’

‘I don’t know,’ answered Dora; ‘mamma will object, I am sure.’

‘But just try,’ persisted Amy; ‘never mind if she does say No; there is no harm in asking.’

‘Ah! but mamma’s “No” is different from aunt Herbert’s,’ replied Dora; ‘it always means she is angry.’

Amy felt this was true, and could not urge her cousin to do what she knew would be so alarming to herself; and Miss Morton’s experience of Dora’s disposition was sufficient to render her aware, that to urge anything was the most certain method of making her determine upon not doing it. She, therefore, was silent, and the conversation dropped, for they had now nearly reached the Hall; but it did not pass from Dora’s mind. It had given her a new idea of duty, and a hope of increased pleasure and interest, in a way which was not only innocent but good; and before she again met Miss Morton she had determined upon making the request to her mamma, that she might be allowed to go into the village, even at the risk of encountering her awful frown, and very decided ‘No.’

CHAPTER XVI.

THE visit to Stephen’s cottage had so engrossed Amy’s mind, that she had for the time entirely forgotten Miss Cunningham and the dance, and even the dread of Mr Cunningham’s conversation; but when the evening came, and they were to appear in the drawing-room, she felt a considerable degree of trepidation, and dressed herself much more reluctantly than usual, lingering in her room, in her anxiety to delay the awful moment, till she found that her cousins had left her to go down stairs alone. Mrs Herbert was tired, and proposed remaining

by herself all the evening ; and there was, therefore, no alternative for Amy, but to summon all her courage, and earnestly hope that no one would take any notice of her. This hope, however, was vain, for Mr Cunningham perceived her instantly, and seemed as much determined as before to enter into conversation. Perhaps he might have had more compassion, had he known what was passing in Amy's mind, and how anxiously she longed to be seated by Dora, at the other end of the room ; but he was so accustomed to be understood by his own family, that he was not aware of the pain he inflicted upon strangers, especially upon a shy, timid child, and his only wish was to take notice of one whom he fancied others, and especially his sister, were inclined to neglect. Amy stood by his side, blushing and trembling, and trying to understand, and feeling really grateful for his kindness in troubling himself about her, but, at the same time, strongly inclined to laugh, as she watched his strange grimaces. Once, however, she caught Margaret's eye, and saw her slyly attempting to imitate him, and in an instant she recovered herself, and making a greater effort to comprehend what he was saying, soon found it comparatively easy. After a few observations on indifferent subjects, Mr Cunningham made some inquiries about Colonel Herbert ; and Amy's heart was quite won when he told her that he recollected him before he went to India, and that every one loved and esteemed him, and that he looked forward now with much pleasure to his return ; and she then ventured to ask the question to which she had not been able hitherto to obtain an answer—how long it would be before her papa could arrive. Mr Cunningham, with great good-nature, began calculating probabilities ; and Amy was more than recompensed for her previous attention, when he said that, now the insurrection was over, there was no doubt Colonel Herbert would be able to leave India immediately, and that, probably, he would be with them almost as soon as a letter could reach them to announce his return ; he might even be in England before they heard from him ; and as he spoke, Amy turned to the door on the entrance of a servant, with a vague fancy that even then her father might be near. Her cousins observed, with surprise, the notice that was taken of her ; Dora felt pleasure, and Margaret envy ; for she recollected her conversation in the morning, and already began to imagine that Amy would be put before her in everything ; but Miss Cunningham would have disliked it more than any one, if she had not been occupied in watching for an

opportunity to speak to her papa upon the subject of the dance. Margaret had suggested that it would be an inconvenient moment ; but Miss Cunningham never allowed time or propriety to interfere with her wishes, and eagerly seizing Lord Rochford's arm as he finished his conversation with Mr Harrington, she drew him aside, and in an audible whisper commenced her entreaties. Lord Rochford listened, and smiled, and patted her shoulder, and called her his pet and his darling, but at first did not seem quite inclined to agree with her, and all that she could obtain was the promise that he would think about it. This, however, did not satisfy her impatience, and she declared she would not let him go till he had really promised to mention it. Lord Rochford saw the impropriety of the idea, and the objections which Mr and Mrs Harrington might very naturally make to it ; but his daughter's will was all-powerful with him, and he hesitated, and half consented, and then looked at Mrs Harrington, and retracted, till Miss Cunningham, seeing her advantage, became so very urgent that the attention of every one was directed to her. Mrs Harrington could not help perceiving that the subject under discussion was one in which she was interested, yet she sat immovable, with her eyes fixed upon her work, thinking it contrary to all the rules of propriety to interfere ; but Mr Harrington was not so particular.

'You have a most indefatigable petitioner there,' he said, as he caught Lord Rochford's eye. 'I wonder you have not yielded long ago, from mere weariness.'

'Clever girl, clever girl,' said Lord Rochford ; 'knows her own power ; but it is not my affair, or she would have had her own way before this, I am afraid.'

'Miss Cunningham looks as if it were something in which I am concerned,' said Mr Harrington. 'I should be most happy to give her pleasure.'

'Yes, now, did I not say so, papa ?' exclaimed Miss Cunningham. 'I knew Mr Harrington could have no objection. It is only that we all want a dance this Christmas, like every one else. There is the hall, which will do so beautifully for it, and every one will enjoy it so much ; and I brought a dress here on purpose.'

Dora's countenance betrayed her vexation, when she found herself included in the general 'we,' and she turned with anxiety to her mother's, when the proposition was made. Mrs Harrington still kept her eyes on her embroidery, and appeared not to

remark what was passing ; but Dora saw that she bit her lip, and contracted her brow, and she well knew that a storm was at hand. Mr Harrington only looked grave and pained.

‘I do not think,’ he said, ‘this is quite the time for such an entertainment ; and I should have hoped that Dora and Margaret’s feelings would have prevented their wishing it. It is a different thing having a few friends in the house, to whom we are desirous of showing a little attention, and giving such a party as you mention. Even if we felt the inclination, which we are very far from doing, common propriety would be against it.’

This was rather too long a speech for Miss Cunningham to listen to attentively ; but she discovered that it meant ‘*no* ;’ and, unmindful of the annoyance expressed in Lord Rochford’s face, and his muttered ‘Yes, yes, to be sure, I told her so—girls are so obstinate,’ she hardly waited till it was ended, before she was at Mrs Harrington’s side, asking her most earnestly to consent.

Mrs Harrington slowly raised her eyes from her work, and, in a voice which sounded in Dora’s ears like the murmuring roll of distant thunder, begged to be informed what it was she wished her to do.

‘To have a dance,’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham, even then feeling but little doubt of her success : ‘a delightful dance in the hall ; just such a one as Sir Francis Egerton gave at Tweeddale Park last year.’

‘And may I ask,’ inquired Mrs Harrington, calmly, ‘who Sir Francis Egerton is, and why his actions are to be an example to me?’

‘Oh, he is a cousin of ours,’ replied Miss Cunningham. ‘Mary Egerton is just my age ; and she opened the ball.’

‘Indeed ! then, in my opinion, she would have been much better employed with her studies in the schoolroom.’

‘You cannot really be in earnest,’ persisted Miss Cunningham ; ‘it was the most charming thing in the world ; and every one was so happy.’

‘Very probably,’ replied Mrs Harrington, again returning to her work.

‘That is so kind of you,’ said Miss Cunningham ; ‘then you will have no objection. When shall it be?’

‘Never, with my consent,’ answered Mrs Harrington, rising in extreme indignation at what she considered impertinence and

want of feeling. 'My daughters have been strangely forgetful to allow such a thing to be mentioned. Dora, at your age, I should have thought you would have known better.'

Dora instantly commenced an excuse, but stopped short in the middle, feeling the awkwardness of laying all the blame upon her sister, and her visitor; and Mrs Harrington, who had at first listened with the quiet determined air of a person resolved beforehand to accept no apology, turned from her, and began assuring Lord Rochford that she was quite aware that Miss Cunningham had nothing really to do with the business—she merely acted as spokeswoman for the rest. Of course, no young lady of her age would venture to make suggestions of the kind without being supported by others; adding, 'I blame my own children, not her.'

This was more than Amy could endure. She had been standing by Mr Cunningham's side during the discussion, with all the unpleasant sensations of being herself guilty; and her colour went and came, in the dread every moment that her aunt would include her in the reprimand. Margaret had quitted the room upon the first symptom of a storm; and there was no one but herself to vindicate Dora. It was a great effort, but she felt that it must be made; and, walking up to Mrs Harrington, she said, in a low frightened voice, 'Indeed, aunt, I heard Dora, at dinner-time, telling them you would not like it.'

'That is right,' said Mr Harrington; 'never let any one be accused unjustly. I was sure Dora could not wish it. As for Margaret, she is so young and thoughtless, that it is not to be wondered at.'

'It is all very well,' said Mrs Harrington, who was far too angry to allow of any justification; 'but Dora should have prevented its being named. She is the eldest; and Amy, too, though so much younger, is quite old enough to know better.'

Poor Amy, for the moment, heartily repented having spoken, and returned to her former position with the thought that she had only made matters worse by interfering; but she remembered afterwards that she meant to do rightly, and that it was better to be blamed wrongly than really to be in fault. Miss Cunningham, in the meanwhile, satisfied with finding that she had escaped censure, cared little what any one else might be feeling, and carelessly taking up a book of prints which lay upon the table, began turning over the leaves with an indifferent air, much to the increase of Mrs Harrington's anger, which was in reality as

much directed against her as against her own daughters, though politeness had induced her to conceal it.

The pause that ensued was felt by every one to be extremely awkward. Mr Cunningham wished to make some excuse for his sister ; but his nervous anxiety rendered his articulation more difficult than usual, and after several efforts he coloured deeply, and gave up the attempt.

Lord Rochford fidgeted, first on one foot and then on the other, and at last walked across the room to get out of the reach of Mrs Harrington, who still stood looking as if she considered some one ought to make apologies ; and seeing that something was expected from him, returned again to say that it was a thoughtless thing, perhaps, of the young people, but it would not do to be too hard upon them ; they meant no harm.

‘The excuse for everything,’ was all Mrs Harrington’s reply ; and Lord Rochford moved away with thoughts which it would have been uncivil to utter.

‘Come,’ exclaimed Mr Harrington, feeling rather ashamed that so much had been said ; ‘I quite agree with Lord Rochford, that no harm was intended. You know, Charlotte, they could not be expected to feel as you and I do ; and besides, after all, we had thought of giving them something like an evening’s amusement, though not quite what Miss Cunningham proposed. There is a celebrated conjurer just arrived in the neighbourhood, and we had settled that he should come here on Wednesday to exhibit, if the young people fancied it ; and then afterwards, if they choose to get up a quadrille just among themselves, I dare say Miss Morton will play to them.’

Amy felt very much relieved at the turn which this was likely to give to the conversation, though she little cared what amusement was proposed, if she could only see her aunt resume her seat and her work ; but Mrs Harrington appeared to be struck by the idea of a fresh person with whom to find fault, for she repeated quickly to herself ‘Emily Morton ! yes, she ought to have prevented it,’ and immediately left the room. Her absence at once caused a sensation of freedom and relief. Miss Cunningham, though inclined to imagine that conjuring tricks were rather vulgar, still felt sufficient curiosity to make some inquiries about them ; and Amy, to whom all things of the kind were entirely new, began expressing her pleasure to Dora, and when Mrs Harrington returned, followed by Miss Morton, the storm had apparently passed away. Miss Morton’s countenance was

as gentle and calm as usual ; but there was a slight nervous agitation in her manner, which Amy had learned to notice as the consequence of one of Mrs Harrington's lectures ; and, when at Lord Rochford's request, she sat down to the piano, to perform her thankless task of playing and singing for the general amusement, her voice trembled so much as to oblige her to give up the song which had been asked for, and only attempt an instrumental piece.

Amy stole quietly to her side, and, with a look and voice which were fully understood, asked if she might be allowed to stand by her and turn over the leaves. There was a tear in Miss Morton's eye, though she smiled and thanked her, but Amy's attention gave her at that moment all that she required—the consciousness that some one was near who could feel for her ; and in a short time she had recovered her self-command.

‘Who was it I heard playing the airs in the last new opera this morning?’ said Mr Harrington, when Miss Morton had finished her piece. ‘Whoever it was seemed to me to be getting on extremely well.’

Amy was going to answer, but Miss Cunningham prevented her. ‘I was trying them over after dinner,’ she said ; ‘but I had never seen them before, and therefore, of course, I made one or two false notes.’

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Dora, ‘there must be some mistake ; for if you remember, you were at the piano just before I went out for my walk, and I heard you say you found them so difficult, you wondered any one could take the trouble to learn them. It must have been Amy—she has been regularly practising them.’

‘I don't know, indeed,’ replied Miss Cunningham, angrily ; ‘I never heard her.’

‘I dare say Dora may be wrong,’ said Mr Harrington ; ‘suppose you were to favour us now.’

Miss Cunningham hesitated a little ; but her self-confidence induced her to make the attempt, though it did not prevent her from blundering so sadly, that Mr Cunningham, in despair at the discordant sounds, at length walked to the piano, closed the book, and said in a low, stern voice, ‘Pray, Lucy, spare us any more ; you must have known you could not play it in the least.’ There was no reply ; for Miss Cunningham feared and respected her brother more than any one in the world, and saw that he was very much annoyed. Mr Harrington began to

make excuses for her, and was unwilling that Amy should play instead ; but he was forced to yield to Mr Cunningham's wish, and she was sent to the instrument ; and, notwithstanding her alarm, satisfied every one that her talent for music was of a very superior kind. Even Lord Rochford, though vexed at his daughter's failure, could not help exclaiming, 'Very good, very good, indeed—very correct time—who taught her, Harrington ?'

'Her mamma was her only instructress for several years,' replied Mr Harrington ; 'but latterly Miss Morton has taken her in hand, and I must say she does her infinite credit.'

'Yes, certainly,' said Lord Rochford, 'very great credit indeed. What should you say, Lucy, to persuading Mrs Harrington to let you benefit a little by Miss Morton now, as a preparation for London ? She would improve you, I dare say, even in these few days, and then when we were in London she might give you some hints as she saw you wanted them.'

'Really,' said Mrs Harrington, who thought this a very strange mode of appropriating the time and talents which were intended for the benefit of her own children, 'it is quite useless to form any plans for London ; I have every reason to be satisfied with the progress my children are making in the country, and shall not think of London masters at present ; I have expressed my determination to your lordship in a very decided way from the first.'

'True, quite true,' replied Lord Rochford, feeling that the refusal had been very decided ; 'only people change ; but we won't talk of London, you don't wish it, I see ; but I should like this young lady to hear Lucy play over a piece or two while we are here.'

Miss Cunningham's countenance expressed anything but amiability ; and she gave her father a look which had often been found efficacious in preventing disagreeable plans, but his head was turned away, and she looked in vain ; and the next moment he was at Miss Morton's side, praising her music, and begging, as a great favour, that she would take a little pains with Lucy, and hear her play occasionally ; in fact, as Mr Harrington had said, take her in hand for a few days.

Dora could scarcely forbear smiling, as she observed the expression of Miss Cunningham's face—it told of pride, mortification, and anger ; and Amy noticed it also, but she was not amused ; she was sorry for both parties ; for whatever might

be Lucy Cunningham's disinclination to become Miss Morton's pupil, it certainly could not exceed Emily Morton's unwillingness to become her instructress. Lord Rochford shared his daughter's dulness of perception; and to complete the unpleasantness of the proposition, he spoke to Amy, hoping that she and Miss Cunningham would learn a few duets together. Poor Amy blushed, and tried, though with difficulty, to express acquiescence; and Mrs Harrington, observing her hesitation, reproved her for her rudeness, and assured Lord Rochford that Dora and Margaret would practise with Miss Cunningham whenever she wished it. It would be a more convenient arrangement, as Amy was only an occasional visitor; and though she had played tolerably well once, she had not received by any means the same advantages as her cousins. Amy could almost have cried with annoyance, but painful as it was to be so undervalued and misunderstood on every occasion, it was, in this instance, a very useful lesson to her, for it prevented the indulgence of vanity at being brought forward in so unusual a manner; and when she saw how Emily Morton was slighted, and remembered her meek, uncomplaining temper, she could only feel vexed with herself for caring so much about it, and long to possess a spirit as humble as hers. The events of the evening, though trifling in themselves, were not so in their consequence. Miss Cunningham went to bed angry with her father, angry with herself, and, above all, angry with Emily Morton and Amy. Of the affair of the dance, she thought but little, for she was not aware that any blame had been attached to her; but she had been foolish in attempting to play, and her father still more so, she decided, in teasing her with lessons, and making a fuss about Miss Morton, instead of depreciating her, and so increasing the difficulties in the way of the London expedition. Amy had been made her rival, and had gained approbation which might have been hers, and, above all, had been noticed by Mr Cunningham, whose last words, as he wished his sister good-night, were, that it would make him entirely contented to see her as sweet-tempered, humble, and unaffected as Amy Herbert. With these feelings the idea of their both going with the rest of the family to London, in case Lord Rochford gained his point, was most provoking; and very earnestly did Miss Cunningham hope that something might occur within the next two months to remove Emily Morton from Emmerton. In her absence, Amy was too much of a child to be cared for, but together they would form a very considerable drawback to

the pleasure she expected; and she thought it would be preferable to give up the journey at once, than to be continually troubled with Miss Morton as an instructress, and Amy Herbert as an example. Amy went to her mother as usual, not quite satisfied with herself. The first elation had subsided, and she was aware of the evil feeling that had arisen in her mind, and at once acknowledged it to Mrs Herbert; and then, referring to the dance, she wondered that Miss Cunningham could have been so blind to the impropriety of the suggestion.

‘I should have thought, mamma,’ she said, ‘that Dora’s face would have shown her she was wrong.’

‘It does not surprise me,’ replied Mrs Herbert, ‘because the same thing happens continually with every one. Whatever we wish for we easily persuade ourselves is allowable.’

‘But there cannot really be any harm in wishing, can there?’ said Amy.

‘Only so far harm as it is the seed of all evil,’ answered her mother. ‘If our wishes were good, our actions would be good also.’

‘But there are a great many wishes which are neither good nor bad, mamma—wishes, I mean, that are of no consequence.’

‘I think that is a mistake, my dear; we are so ignorant that we never can tell whether even a passing thought may not be of consequence; and, with regard to our wishes, the moment we see that we shall not be permitted to indulge them, we must try and get rid of them.’

‘I do not quite see why it is necessary,’ said Amy.

‘Because,’ replied her mother, ‘our will ceases then to be the same as the will of God. There is a very fearful lesson given us in the Bible on this subject in the history of Balaam. He wished to go with the prince of Moab in the expectation of receiving a great reward, and God forbade him. His duty then was to conquer his inclination; but, instead of this, he only obeyed outwardly and still continued to wish, and at last he was permitted to follow his own way; but we are told that the anger of God was kindled against him.’

‘I see that he was wrong,’ said Amy, ‘but must we not wish for little things?’

‘If we were quite good, we should never do so, my love; we should see plainly that even the smallest events of our lives are ordered for our good; and it is better to begin with controlling our wishes in trifles, and then we shall not be led astray by them

in great things. Of course there is no harm in wishing for innocent things, as long as it is permitted us to enjoy them; but when they are put beyond our reach our wishes must cease.'

Amy was too tired to converse more; but, although she felt that the idea was a difficult one to realise, she did not the less resolve on putting it in practice.

CHAPTER XVII.

'I WISH Frank would not make such a fuss about those stupid boys who are coming to-day,' said Dora, as he left the room when breakfast was ended, expressing his great delight that Monday morning was at length arrived, and begging them all to make a point of coming down to the lake in the afternoon to see the skating; 'it is bad enough to have a number of strange girls here, but really to be worried with rude boys is more than any one can bear.'

'Perhaps they are not rude,' said Amy.

'Yes, but they are,' replied Dora. 'I am sure they must be rude and awkward; I cannot bear them.'

'But Frank, you can bear him.'

'Oh, that is quite a different thing—not but what he is a torment sometimes; but I do not want to talk about them now. Margaret, please, don't go away; just help me to settle how we are to amuse ourselves when the people come. I have had such a lecture from mamma this morning about making ourselves agreeable.'

'Dear me, I don't know,' said Margaret; 'let them take care of themselves; I daresay they will find something to do.'

'There is the conjurer for Wednesday,' observed Dora, thoughtfully; 'but there are two days to that, and what shall we do with them till then?'

'Really,' said Miss Cunningham, 'I should think there would be quite sufficient amusement in being here and seeing the house; for you told me the other day they none of them lived in such a large place.'

'Yes,' said Margaret, 'to be sure they can go over the house, and round the grounds.'

'Round the grounds!' exclaimed Dora; 'why it is going to snow hard.'

‘Well,’ replied Margaret, ‘I should never trouble myself about it beforehand ; when they come they will amuse themselves, and if they do not like it they need not come again.’

‘That is not my way,’ continued Dora ; ‘it would not be very agreeable to be told they had had a stupid visit at the house of the first gentleman in the county. We must have more ways of entertaining them than they can have at home.’

‘I can’t think, though, what they are,’ said Amy ; ‘but I daresay you will recollect something when the time comes ; and you know. Dora, though I could not talk to any one of them as you can, I could play with the little ones.’

‘Ah ! but I do not mind the little ones,’ said Dora ; ‘they will be very happy with a doll, and Emily Morton will take care of them ; but there are two or three great ones, the Miss Stanleys and Miss Warner, who have always been at school ; I have not seen them, and I know they are coming early ; people always do come early when one does not want them ;’ and Dora looked at Miss Cunningham, and thought of the last Saturday morning.

‘We might talk for ever,’ said Margaret, ‘and it would be no good, and really I have no time to think about it now. Do, Lucy, come to my room, and look at that dress which you said could be altered like yours. Morris will have no time if it is not given her this morning, and I must go and talk to mamma before it is begun.’

‘That is just like you, Margaret,’ said Dora, ‘you never will help me ; but mamma says you must try this afternoon, so it will be no use for you and Lucy to shut yourselves up in your room ; you must come down, or she will be very angry.’

Amy saw that Dora was gradually becoming extremely annoyed, and earnestly longed to soothe her, but she was rather afraid to interfere ; she did, however, venture to say, that perhaps some of them might be fond of reading, and then there would be less trouble.

‘Oh yes !’ exclaimed Margaret, who did not quite like to go and yet was very unwilling to stay, ‘that will just do, Amy ; they shall read, and then they will all be quite comfortable, and we may go our own way ; I am so glad that matter is settled, I do so hate trouble and fuss.’

‘So we do all,’ said Dora, angrily, as Margaret hastily ran out of the room ; ‘only some people are forced to take it. That plan of yours will not do at all, Amy, and I cannot think how you

could be so silly as to propose it. School-girls never like reading, and if they do, they can have enough of it at home. What they ought to have here should be something to mark the place, something they should remember, something, in short, quite different from what they could find anywhere else.'

Amy did her best to think, but it was all to no purpose; and Dora at last could only sigh and moan, and walk to the window and watch the weather, and wish that the snow would come down and keep them all at home.

'And snow Miss Cunningham in,' said Amy, laughing.

'To be sure,' answered Dora, 'that would be rather odious. What a goose she made of herself last night, Amy, and how delighted I was when you had all the praise.'

'So was I too,' said Amy; 'but I don't think I was right. I am sure, indeed, I was not; for I spoke to mamma about it afterwards, and she told me it was vanity.'

'As for that,' said Dora, 'every one is vain.'

'But then,' said Amy, 'we promised at our baptism that we would not be so; and mamma says that persons who are vain soon become envious, and that envy leads to very great crimes, and that if we indulge in vanity, we can never tell how wicked we shall become by and by.'

'I cannot understand why you are always talking of baptism, Amy,' said Dora; 'it seems as if it had something to do with everything, according to your notions.'

'According to mamma's notions, you mean; she reminds me of it so often that I cannot possibly forget it.'

'But there is no one in the world who has kept the promise,' said Dora; 'and then they say we have such a wicked nature; what is the use of thinking about being good when we have no power to be so?'

'I do not think I understand it quite,' replied Amy, 'and I am sure, Dora, I cannot teach you, but I could tell you what mamma tells me.'

'And what is that?' asked Dora.

'Mamma says,' answered Amy, 'that when we are born we all have very wicked natures; but that, when we are baptized, God gives us a new nature which is good; and that, when we grow up, we can do right if we really wish to do it, because we have the Holy Spirit always to help us; and once, when I made an excuse for something I had done wrong, by saying that it was natural, and I could not help it, she told me that it might

have been an excuse if I had not been baptized, but that now it was no excuse at all.'

'Then what are we to do?' said Dora; 'no person really keeps their promise. How wicked we must all be!'

'Mamma says we are,' replied Amy; 'and that we ought to be so very careful about our smallest actions, and our words and thoughts, because it is so dangerous to do wrong now.'

'But,' said Dora, 'I cannot see why people should be baptized, if it only makes them worse off than they were before.'

'Oh! but indeed, Dora,' exclaimed Amy, looking rather shocked, 'it makes us better off than we were before,—a great deal better off; for you know the service about baptism says that we are made God's children, really His children; and that, when we die, we shall go to heaven, if we try and do right now, and beg Him to forgive us when we do wrong, for our Saviour's sake.'

'I do not understand it,' said Dora; 'and I never heard any one talk about it till I came to Emmerton.'

'I did not understand it half as well,' replied Amy, 'till mamma told me a story about uncle Harrington's birthday, and said that, when we were baptized, we were made heirs of heaven, just as he was heir to this place and all the property; and even now it puzzles me very much, and very often I cannot believe that it is all true; but I try to do so, because mamma says it is, and shows me where it is written in the Bible.'

'But how can we tell that we have a good nature given us at our baptism?' said Dora; 'I never feel it; I don't think I do anything that is right all day long; you may have a good nature, Amy, and I think you have, but I know I have not.'

'Mamma says,' answered Amy, 'that being sorry for our faults and wishing to do better is a sign of it; and you know, Dora, you often tell me how much you wish to do right, and sometimes, when I have had a great many wrong feelings—vain feelings, I mean, and angry and envious ones—the only thing that makes me at all happy again, is because I feel sorry for it.'

Dora sighed deeply. 'I wish,' she said, 'that the bad nature would go all at once, I am so tired of wishing to do good, and always doing wrong, and then I begin to think there is no use in trying. It would be easier if I could believe that it was true about baptism, because then it would appear as if there was something to help me; but I have always heard people talk about having such a very wicked nature, till at last it seemed foolish to

hope to be good, as if it were impossible ; not but what I do try sometimes, Amy,' she continued, with a sudden impulse to be unreserved, which she had occasionally felt when talking to her cousin since their little disagreement ; 'I do try sometimes, though I daresay you will not believe it, because I am so cross. I meant to have tried this morning, only Lucy Cunningham made me so angry by the way she twisted her head about, and the nonsense she talked at breakfast, that I could not help becoming out of humour with every one ; and when once I am annoyed in the morning, I go on so all day ; but you cannot understand that, it is so unlike you.'

'I can, though,' replied Amy, 'for I very often am provoked when I watch Miss Cunningham, and hear her talk ; but I try not to look at her, and to think of something else.'

'I cannot do that,' said Dora ; 'when she is in the room, I find myself watching her and listening to her, though I would give the world not to do it ; for I am always longing to stop her, or say something sharp ; and yet, when I do, I am so vexed with myself for it. I know nothing will ever go right while she is with us.'

'Then you will not be uncomfortable long,' replied Amy.

'But,' said Dora, 'I know very well that it is no use feeling properly only when everything goes as you like ; what I wish is to have the power of being good always. There are some people who are never put out of humour—aunt Herbert for one ; I long to be like her.'

'So do I,' exclaimed Amy, eagerly ; 'but then she is so very, very good ; I don't think it is possible to be what she is ; Mrs Walton says she never met with any one like her.'

'That is what disheartens me ; good people are so up in the clouds, where one can never get at them.'

'I suppose, though,' answered Amy, 'they were not always so good. Mamma often says she did a great many naughty things when she was my age.'

'I wish she would tell me what made her better, then,' said Dora. 'Did she ever tell you?'

'No,' replied Amy ; 'all that she ever told me was what I ought to do myself to cure my faults ; and she said that she would pray to God to help me.'

'No one will ever promise that for me,' observed Dora, sighing.

'But mamma will, I am sure,' exclaimed Amy, eagerly ; 'and I——'

'Why do you stop?' said Dora.

‘Mamma tells me to mention all your names in my prayers,’ replied Amy; ‘but I don’t mean that that would be the same as her doing so, because she is so much better.’

‘I cannot see what difference that can make. I should like very much to think you did it always for me; but it must be such a trouble to remember.’

‘Oh no, Dora, it would seem so unkind not to do it; and if I thought you cared, I never could forget; but some day or other, when I am quite good, it will be of much more use.’

‘Does aunt Herbert think that no one must pray for others but those who never do anything wrong?’ asked Dora, in a tone of surprise.

‘No; she says we all ought to pray for each other, and that it is quite our duty. But we are told in the Bible that very good persons’ prayers are heard particularly; and so mamma says that is one reason for trying to conquer our faults; because God will be more likely to attend to us then.’

‘I cannot think you ever had any faults to cure; you never could have been ill-tempered.’

‘O Dora! pray don’t say so; it makes me think I must be so deceitful, for I am often ill-tempered, and I used to be so every day at my lessons.’

‘Then,’ said Dora, ‘you can tell me just what I want to know. What did you do to make yourself better?’

‘I used to talk about it to mamma,’ replied Amy; ‘and one day particularly, I remember, I was very unhappy, and thought I should be cross all my life; and then she showed me a prayer which she had written out for me. It was taken from the Collects and the Psalms; and she begged me to repeat it every morning and evening, and once in the middle of the day, too, and try to think about it; and she marked some verses in the Bible, and gave me a short prayer besides—just a few words to say to myself when I felt that I was becoming out of temper; and she advised me, when I knew I had been doing wrong, in that or anything else, to go to my room instantly, and pray to God to forgive me; and after I had done as she desired for some time, and really tried very hard not to speak when I was angry, and to give up to whatever mamma wished, I found it much easier to be good-tempered.’

‘But,’ said Dora, ‘that is so much to do. I never heard before of any one saying their prayers in the middle of the day. Why should it be necessary?’

‘Oh!’ replied Amy, ‘if people do not pray, they never can have any help from God; and the Holy Spirit, which was given them at their baptism, will go away from them, and they will become dreadfully wicked.’

‘It is right for people to say their prayers every morning and evening, of course,’ said Dora; ‘but I must say again, I never heard of any persons doing it in the middle of the day.’

‘I thought a great many people did; at least I know I have read in the old times of some who said them seven times, and in the Bible it is mentioned. Don’t you remember one of the lessons they read in the church about Daniel, and how he prayed three times every day?’

‘Ah, yes! in the Bible; but then in the Bible every one does what is right. I never think the persons we read of there could be like us.’

‘They did not always do right, though,’ answered Amy, ‘because it very often says that God was displeased with them. You know how angry Moses was once, and how he was not allowed to go with the Israelites. Whenever I read that, I always think that I should have felt exactly like him.’

‘I cannot say I ever thought much about it,’ said Dora. ‘One hears it all in church; but I always am so sleepy on a Sunday, that I cannot attend.’

‘But I suppose you are not always sleepy when you read at home.’

‘I never do read at home now; we used to do it when we were children, for mamma taught us to read like every one else out of the Bible, but I thought of nothing but the hard words, and it always appeared a lesson book, and so I never looked at it afterwards. I forgot, though, on a Sunday we were accustomed to read a chapter, but we have left off that lately—I don’t quite know why, except that we are too old.’

‘Too old to read the Bible!’ repeated Amy, with a feeling of painful surprise that her cousin should have such ideas.

‘I don’t mean too old to read it at all,’ replied Dora, ‘but too old to be forced to do it.’

‘Mamma does not force me to do it,’ said Amy; ‘but it seems to come naturally; the day would be quite strange if we missed it.’

Do you mean to say that you read it every day, or only on Sundays?’

‘Every day,’ replied Amy ‘We always read the psalms and

lessons the first thing after breakfast, except on Wednesdays and Fridays, and Saints' days, when we go to church.'

'Go to church on the week-days!' exclaimed Dora; 'who ever heard of such a thing?'

'I thought it was what almost every one did,' replied Amy; 'and I always fancied you would if you were not so far from the church.'

'I cannot imagine what the good of it all is,' said Dora.

'But it is ordered,' replied Amy, 'in the Prayer Book.'

'I do not see that is any reason for it; its being ordered does not make it good.'

'I once asked mamma some questions about it,' said Amy, 'and she told me that the Prayer Book was put together by very good men, who know a great deal better than we do what was right; and that it was composed from the prayers which were used a great, great many years before, just in the time after our Saviour died, and that they had made all the rules about the service and the Saints' days, according to the old customs; and so now, it was the law of the Church in England, and every one ought to attend to it.'

'Every one does not attend to it, though,' replied Dora; 'at Wayland, no person ever thought of going to church except on Sundays.'

'I believe,' said Amy, 'the Prayer Book says there ought to be service every day; and there are regular psalms and lessons marked in the calendar.'

'Perhaps so; but I am sure if people were to go to church as often as you say, there would be no time for anything else.'

'We generally manage to do very much the same on Wednesdays and Fridays as on other days; it is merely doing things at different hours.'

'If I could only see the good of it, I should not care,' said Dora; 'but it is so strange to be always thinking so much of one thing; prayers at home, and reading the Bible, and going to church every day—I should get so tired of it.'

'You would not be tired if you were accustomed to it, because it would come to you naturally, like eating, and drinking, and sleeping; and, besides, it prevents one from going on wrong all day.'

'How do you mean?' asked Dora.

'Don't you know,' replied Amy, 'that when things are disagreeable in the morning, and one is put out of temper, it seems as if nothing would put one right again?'

‘Well, yes!’ said Dora, rather impatiently; ‘go on.’

‘Then,’ continued Amy, ‘if I am cross, and the time comes for reading the psalms and lessons, or going to church, or saying the prayer mamma gave me for the middle of the day, it stops me; because it seems so much more wicked to be cross in church, or when one is reading the Bible, than at any other time; and then I get better, and set off again fresh.’

‘That is the reason, I suppose,’ said Dora, ‘that you are never angry a whole day together, as a great many people are; but I cannot understand where you get the time for it all; does it never interfere with your walking or your lessons?’

‘No,’ replied Amy, ‘because we reckon upon it beforehand; and when we are thinking of what is to be done in the day, we always remember that we shall be sometime in church or reading the psalms and lessons; and mamma arranges so as not to let it interfere.’

‘But still you must be tired of it,’ persisted Dora; ‘it is quite impossible that you should go on, day after day, and not wish for a change. I am sure I get quite tired of going to church on Sundays; and I do not know what I should do if I were obliged to go every day.’

‘I don’t like it always,’ replied Amy, while the colour mounted to her cheek; ‘and I know I do not attend half as I ought; but I am sure it makes the day go right, and mamma tells me it will be pleasanter to me every year; besides, I know that if it were not for going to church and reading with mamma, and all that sort of thing, I should be so much more ill-tempered, and envious, and vain, than I am now, and then I should be wretched; for you don’t know, Dora, what very bad feelings I have sometimes;’ and the tears started into Amy’s eyes as she spoke, at the recollection of the last Saturday evening.

Dora was silent; her own faults were so much greater than her cousin’s, that Amy’s self-reproach was more bitter than any reproof could possibly have been. If Amy were so grieved at the remembrance of an impatient word, or a passing thought of vanity, what ought she to feel whose whole life had been one of pride and self-will? She felt, too, as if she had no right to attempt to comfort one who was so much better than herself; and stood for several moments looking at Amy with wonder and interest, till the striking of the clock recalled her to herself, and, starting at the time they had spent together, she declared the

day was half gone already, and there were a hundred things to be done before the people came.

‘I had quite forgotten them,’ said Amy; ‘I think, Dora, I forget a great many things when I am talking to you.’

‘Do you?’ said Dora, turning suddenly round to kiss her; ‘it cannot be any use to you to talk to me, because you have aunt Herbert to go to.’

‘I do like it, though, so very much,’ answered Amy, ‘and I think about it afterwards; but I wish I could help you in amusing every one.’

‘I must leave them to their fate,’ said Dora, preparing to leave the room, ‘for mamma wants me, I know; but Amy,’ she added, stopping, and apparently desirous, yet unwilling to say more; ‘I wish——no, never mind now.’

‘Oh! do tell it me,’ said Amy; ‘is it anything I can do for you? I should be so glad.’

‘No, nothing, nothing,’ hastily repeated Dora, though her manner was at variance with her words.

‘But you must tell me,’ said Amy, seizing her dress to prevent her going; ‘I am sure you mean something; can I look out some books, or put the room in order, or get anything for you?’

‘No, nothing of that kind; but, Amy, should you—should you very much mind letting me see the prayer aunt Herbert gave you?’

‘Oh! if you would but let me give it you,’ exclaimed Amy, ‘for it is in mamma’s handwriting; and I think you would like it all the better for that, and it is such a nice one; shall I go and fetch it?’

‘I must not wait now,’ said Dora, ‘for I am after my time with mamma; but if you will put it in my room by and by, I should thank you so very much; and I shall always think of you when I look at it.’

‘And of mamma,’ said Amy; ‘and some day, perhaps, Dora, you will be able to talk to her as I do, and ask her anything you want to know.’

Dora shook her head, for she believed she never could be unreserved with any one but her cousin, and hastened to her mamma’s room, with a longing desire that she could go to her for advice as Amy did to Mrs Herbert.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DORA'S time was so fully occupied for the rest of the morning that she was quite unable to form any scheme of amusement ; and three o'clock arrived, and with it carriage after carriage, each bringing an importation of visitors, before she had at all decided upon what was to be done with them. Frank had gone out with the young Dornfords, who came early, according to their engagement ; and the three boys who arrived afterwards were immediately despatched to the lake to find him, and amuse themselves with skating.

'Boys are no trouble,' thought Dora ; 'they always go out of doors, and take care of themselves ; but girls——' and she sighed as she looked upon the five young ladies who, dressed in their best silks and gayest bonnets, stood each by the side of her mamma, very silent, very shy, and very uncomfortable.

'You will take your young friends into the schoolroom, Dora,' said Mrs Harrington, in her most gentle tone. 'I suppose none of them will like walking such a cold afternoon as this ; but you will find plenty of entertainment for them there ; and with Margaret, and Miss Cunningham, and Amy, you will make quite a pleasant little party.'

'There can be no doubt of that,' said a tall, good-natured looking lady, who had brought her two little girls to pay their first visit from home. 'In a house like this there is always something agreeable to be done ; and then it is so pleasant for young people to be together. My children live in such retirement that it is an especial treat to them to have companions.'

The two little girls clung more closely to their mother's side as she spoke, apparently thinking that the greatest treat at that moment would be to remain under her protection ; but Dora led the way to the door, and they were obliged to follow, hand in hand, and casting imploring looks upon their mamma to persuade her to go with them. She half rose from her seat, but Mrs Harrington stopped her. 'You need not be uneasy. Mrs Danvers,' she said ; 'Dora will take care of them.'

'Oh yes ! of course, of course,' repeated Mrs Danvers ; 'but they are so shy, poor children ; I should just like to see how they manage to go on amongst so many strangers.'

'Certainly,' replied Mrs Harrington ; 'we will look in upon them by and by. Would you like to take a little walk before

dinner, or should you prefer remaining in the house, as it is so cold ?'

'I should be glad to know what the children will do,' said poor Mrs Danvers, in a fever of anxiety for their enjoyment, the moment they were out of her sight.

'We will inquire presently,' persisted Mrs Harrington, who was always firm, even in trifling matters ; and had made up her mind they should be left to themselves at first, to become acquainted with the rest of the party.

'If I could just ask them,' said Mrs Danvers ; 'I dare say I could easily find my way to the schoolroom—where is it ?'

'At the other end of the house,' replied Mrs Harrington.

'Oh, just along the passages that we passed as we came in, I dare say.'

'No, quite in a contrary direction. If you wish to know what your children prefer doing, Thomson shall ask for you.'

Mrs Harrington rang the bell, and Thomson was sent to the schoolroom, while Mrs Danvers sat pondering upon the extreme unpleasantness of being a visitor in the house of any lady who was determined to have her own way.

Amy was in the schoolroom, waiting for her cousins, and a little time was spent in introductions, and in discussing whether it was a pleasant afternoon, and whether the snow would be disagreeable if they went out on the terrace ; and when at last it was decided to be very cold, and that they had thin shoes on, and that one was rather liable to cold, and another to cough, &c., Dora found they were resolutely bent on an afternoon in the house, and all that was to be done was to show them to their respective apartments to take off their bonnets and shawls, and to wish heartily that they would remain there till summoned to the drawing-room for the evening. Quickly, much more quickly than Dora had supposed possible, they appeared again, full of expectation that something was to happen which was to give them very great pleasure. The visit to Emmerton had been talked of for weeks before ; it had been the subject of their thoughts by day and their dreams by night ; and the three school-girls (Dora's particular dread) had exulted when they announced to their companions that a portion of the Christmas holidays was to be passed at Emmerton Hall. In former days Mr Harrington's family had been not only the richest, but the gayest in the county, and every one associated with the name of Emmerton visions of breakfast-parties, dinner-parties, riding-parties, music, balls, and every

kind of festivity ; and though too young to be admitted to all these pleasures, the young ladies had still a bright, but somewhat indistinct notion, that a visit at Emmerton must be the height of human enjoyment ; whilst poor Dora was expected to realise all these gay expectations when she was dissatisfied with herself, unhappy at the recollection of Wayland and her brother Edward, and with no one but Amy to assist in making every one comfortable.

A faint, despairing smile passed over her face as they entered, one after the other ; and she cast a hopeless glance at Amy. Margaret had promised to appear, but Miss Cunningham considered it necessary to make some change in her dress, and her inseparable companion could not possibly leave her.

‘ You must have had a very cold drive,’ said Dora to the eldest Miss Stanley, a girl about her own age,—quiet, timid, and awed by the strangeness of everything about her. It was the fourth time the observation had been made ; and for the fourth time the same low, half-hesitating ‘ Yes,’ was given in reply ; and there the conversation ended, and Dora turned to her other visitors, hoping to find them more communicative. Unhappily her manner was such as to repel instead of encouraging them ; she really wished to be kind and agreeable, but she did not for a moment forget that she was Miss Harrington of Emmerton Hall ; and her efforts to be polite were so evident, and she was so very condescending in everything she did and said, that it was impossible for the poor girls to be at ease.

Amy saw that her cousin was very different from what she usually was, but could not comprehend in what the change consisted, and only longed for her to leave off asking them if they liked music and drawing, and whether they preferred home or school, and how many brothers and sisters they had, and talk of something more interesting. Anything would have been preferable to the formality of asking a string of questions ; even she herself was a little chilled by Dora’s manner, and only ventured to say a few words in an undertone to a rather pretty, delicate girl, who stood by the fire near her. This most disagreeable constraint had lasted about ten minutes, when, to Amy’s extreme satisfaction, Miss Morton’s voice was heard in the passage, and almost immediately afterwards she entered, followed by Rose, laden with a doll nearly as large as herself, which she was only allowed to play with occasionally. She ran into the room with great glee, to exhibit her treasure to Amy, but shrank away on

seeing so many strange faces ; every one, however, seemed to feel her appearance an indescribable relief ; the shy Miss Stanley stooped to kiss her, and ask how old she was ; her sister begged to know the name of the doll ; and Amy's friend was delighted to find in her a resemblance to a sister of about the same age ; while the two younger children looked with envy and admiration upon the handsome pink frock and bright blue bonnet, which was always the holiday dress of the beautiful doll. But a greater charm than Rose and her doll was soon found in Emily Morton's manner. She went from one to the other, saying something kind to each, in a voice so sweet that it would have made even a commonplace expression agreeable ; and after a few trifling questions, which gave her some idea of their peculiar tastes and dispositions, she managed, by making observations of her own, to induce them to do the same ; and listening with real and not forced interest to whatever was said, she led them on to describe their companions and their school life, till Dora found, to her surprise, that Hester Stanley, whom she had decided in her own mind to be almost devoid of intellect, and certainly unutterably dull, was a good French and Italian scholar, very fond of drawing, and farther advanced than herself in her acquaintance with books in general ; that her sister was extremely amusing ; and that Mary Warner had travelled on the Continent, and had many stories to tell of the peculiarities of foreign manners and customs. The younger children looked at Rose for a few minutes without speaking, then ventured to touch the doll, and at last, with one consent, seemed to resolve on being sociable, and retired into a corner of the room to enact the parts of mamma, nurse, and doctor to the poor doll, who, in spite of her brilliant colour, was pronounced to be in a most dangerous state of health, and to require instant advice ; while the party collected round the fire, growing bolder and bolder as the noise in the room increased, began at last so entirely to enjoy themselves, that when the dusk of the evening had stolen on them, and a proposition was made by the children for candles, there was a general petition for a few moments' respite, that they might have the luxury and freedom of talking by firelight prolonged. It was a strange contrast to the stiffness of the first half-hour ; and Dora hardly knew whether she quite approved of it ; it seemed to throw her so completely in the background ; but to Amy it was delightful. It was so new, and so interesting to hear a description of a school life, that she thought she could have listened for ever ; and even

Margaret and Miss Cunningham, who came into the room in the middle of one of Julia Stanley's most amusing stories, appeared to take some pleasure in what was passing. Margaret's interest was real; but Miss Cunningham's satisfaction arose from the comparison which she could make in her own mind between the splendour of Rochford Park and the very ordinary style of living to which her new acquaintances had been accustomed; and at every possible opportunity she broke out into exclamations of 'Dear me! how strange! how very shabby! what a wretched place your school must be!' till she hoped she had fully convinced them of the fact, that the habits in which she had been brought up were immeasurably superior to theirs. Julia Stanley, however, was not at all awed by Miss Cunningham's grandeur; she continued her stories, talking very fast, and laughing heartily, and caring little what was thought as long as she could make others laugh also; but her sister was not equally insensible; and every now and then she endeavoured to check the flow of Julia's spirits, and to suggest that the customs of their school were not entirely as she had represented.

'You must not believe everything Julia tells you exactly,' she said, turning to Miss Cunningham, who seemed quite unable to comprehend the fact of any young ladies being so ill-treated as to have no second course at dinner, no curtains to their beds, nor fires in their rooms. 'She runs on so fast that she forgets. We always have puddings on Saturdays; and we have fires when we are ill; and there are curtains in the largest room, only we have never slept there.'

'Well, then, bad is the best, is all that I can say for your school,' said Miss Cunningham; 'and as for ladies being brought up in such a way, how is it possible for them ever to know how to behave, if they are not taken more care of?'

'It must be very uncomfortable,' said Dora; 'but really I cannot see what a second course, and curtains, and fires, have to do with manners.'

'To be sure not,' exclaimed Julia; 'what does it signify? It is very hard and disagreeable sometimes, and we cry a good deal when first we go there—that is, some of the little ones do; but after a few weeks it is all right, and we eat our cold rice pudding, and think it delicious.'

'Cold rice pudding!' repeated Amy, who had a peculiar dislike to it; 'do you never have anything but cold rice pudding?'

‘Not very often,’ replied Julia ; ‘but, as I said before, it really does not signify. I assure you, if you were up at six o’clock every day, as we are, and had nothing but hard lessons from morning till night, you would think cold rice pudding one of the nicest things you had ever tasted. I don’t think I ever like anything we have at home half as well.’

Well !’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham, ‘I never heard of such a school before ; all my notions were, that young ladies lived together, and learned a few lessons, and had French and drawing masters, and ladies’ maids, and carriages—that would be agreeable enough ; but you might just as well be cottagers’ children, if you live so shabbily ; and what a difference it must make after your home ! How you must miss your carriage and servants !’

‘I do not,’ said Mary Warner ; ‘we have no carriage.’

‘Not keep a carriage !’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham ; ‘then how do you manage to get from one place to another ?’

‘Really,’ interrupted Dora, ‘I do not think you should cross-question any one in that way. Of course, there are carriages to be had, even if people do not choose to keep them.’

‘There are coaches always passing near us,’ said Mary ; ‘and so it is very convenient.’

‘Coaches !—you mean stage coaches, I suppose,’ said Miss Cunningham.

Yes,’ replied Mary ; ‘one of them goes to Sandham, where our school is ; so there is no difficulty about my travelling.’

‘That is the strangest thing of all,’ said Miss Cunningham. ‘Do you mean really that your papa and mamma allow you to travel about the country in a stage coach ?’

The tone in which this was said sounded even more disagreeable than the words ; and Julia Stanley instantly took offence. ‘And why not !’ she exclaimed ; ‘why should not people ride in stage coaches if they like it ?’

‘Of course, if they like it,’ said Margaret, who was always willing to side with her friend ; ‘but liking it is a very different thing from being obliged to do it.’

‘So it may be,’ replied Julia ; ‘but almost every one does it now.’

‘I never do,’ said Miss Cunningham, pointedly.

‘Very likely,’ answered Julia ; ‘but then you are only one person ; and almost all those I know go in stage coaches constantly ; so you need not be so much surprised at Mary Warner.’

Miss Cunningham pouted and drew up her head, and thought Julia one of the most forward, impertinent girls she had ever met with ; and Hester began to fear there must be something very derogatory to the dignity of a lady in travelling by a public conveyance ; and yet remembering that once, when their own horses were lame, she had been obliged to avail herself of it, she could not with a clear conscience deny her acquaintance with them ; she could, however, abuse them heartily, and lament the necessity which had induced their papa to allow it—quite agreeing with Margaret and Miss Cunningham, that it was not a common thing for people to do.

‘Nonsense, Hester,’ exclaimed Julia ; ‘you know as well as I do, that it is the most probable thing in the world that we shall go back to school by the coach ; and what will your pride say to that ?’

‘Oh, papa mentioned something about it one day,’ replied Hester ; ‘but of course he was not in earnest.’

‘But he was,’ answered Julia. ‘He said that now our cousins had left school, it would be a great expense for us to travel by ourselves, and that he should certainly put us into the stage coach, and let William take care of us, and then there would be no trouble about the matter. I wish,’ she added, turning to Amy, who stood next her, ‘that Hester would not try, as she always does, to make herself as grand and as fine as the people she is with.’

Amy felt a slight pang of self-reproach as Julia spoke this ; for when the conversation had first begun, she felt she should not like to say, as Mary Warner had done, that her papa and mamma did not keep a carriage ; and it appeared almost like deception to blame another for a fault she was conscious of herself. ‘I think,’ she said, in reply to Julia’s observation, ‘that it is not right to wish to be just the same as other people ; but I am afraid I should like it ; and I am sure, indeed,’ she added, with an effort, ‘that I should be glad to have a carriage to take me wherever I wanted to go.’

‘Then you have not one,’ said Julia ; ‘that seems strange, being Mr Harrington’s niece.’

‘My uncle’s being rich does not make any difference to us,’ was the answer, ‘except when we are staying here, and have the use of his things ; but I think I should almost prefer being without them, because then I should not miss them.’

‘I used to think,’ said Julia, still speaking in a tone only to

be heard by Amy, 'that it signified a great deal about the way in which people lived till I knew Mary Warner; but she had such different notions that she made me think differently too.'

'What notions?' asked Amy.

'Oh, I cannot tell you all now; but her papa was very rich—very rich indeed, and lived in a beautiful place; but in some way—I cannot quite understand how—he lost all his money, and was obliged to sell his property, and live in a much smaller house. If he had chosen, he might have had it all back again; but he is a very good man, and would not do something which he thought was not quite honourable; and so they continue living in the same inferior way, though no one, of course, thinks the worse of him for it, because every one says he has acted so nobly. This makes Mary care little for the change. She says her papa is so respected, and she is so fond of him, that it seems better to her than if they had all the fine places in the world.'

Amy looked with interest at Mary as she heard this; but she was not able to continue the conversation, for the servant entered with candles, and tea immediately followed; and after tea they were all to dress for the evening.

To Dora's satisfaction, it had been decided that the boys were to dine late, so she was spared the task of keeping them in order; and, finding that every one was beginning to feel comfortable and at home, her own dignity a little relaxed, and she began to think that, after all, the infliction of a three days' visit from the school-girls might not be so very unendurable.

Amy hastened to her mother's room as soon as tea was over, in the hope of finding her there; for she had intended dining by herself, and appearing in the drawing-room only in the evening. 'I must talk to you one minute, dear mamma,' she said, as she entered. 'We have been getting on so nicely in the schoolroom—so much better than I expected, only it was dreadful just at first. They were so silent, and Dora looked like a duchess. If I had not been her cousin I should have laughed; but I fancied they would think I ought to entertain them, and that made me feel more shy than ever; and then they all spoke in such a low voice that every word I said was heard.'

'Well!' answered Mrs Herbert; 'but who broke the spell?'

'Miss Morton, mamma,' replied Amy; 'and I should like to understand what made her so different from Dora.'

'She is much older,' said Mrs Herbert; 'naturally that would make a difference.'

‘It was not quite that,’ continued Amy; ‘for if it had been my aunt Harrington, I don’t think we should have ventured to speak a word; but there was something in Miss Morton’s manner that made every one appear at ease. Can you tell me what it was?’

‘You must imagine me to be a fairy. How can I possibly judge of what Miss Morton did when I was not present?’

‘But can you not guess from her character?’ asked Amy. ‘You have seen so much more of her lately, that I think you must know.’

‘At least, you are determined, as usual,’ said Mrs Herbert, smiling, ‘that I shall give you a reason for everything which you cannot quite comprehend. I suspect, in the present instance, the secret consisted in Dora’s thinking of herself all the time she was talking, and Miss Morton’s thinking of others.’

‘That is not quite clear, mamma,’ replied Amy. ‘Does thinking of one’s self make one stiff and formal?’

‘Generally, either stiff or affected,’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘yet it is very difficult to avoid doing it. You will often hear persons speaking of what are sometimes called “company manners,”—not meaning exactly affectation, but a manner approaching to it, which is not quite natural; and it almost always arises from this same cause. It is, in fact, very nearly allied to selfishness; for we care so much more for ourselves than others, that we take a greater interest in thinking of ourselves than of them, and so we become disagreeable.’

‘But how can we help it?’ asked Amy.

‘By trying, every day of our lives, to consult the happiness of those we live with,’ answered Mrs Herbert. ‘I mean, in the merest trifles, such as giving up a pleasant seat, or an amusing book, or fetching things for them to save them trouble, or listening to them when they wish to talk to us. By these means we can acquire a habit of forgetting ourselves which will remain with us whether we are in company, or only with our own family.’

Amy listened to her mother with an earnest wish to follow her advice; and when she joined the party in the drawing-room she found immediate opportunities of putting it in practice.

The evening was a cheerful one, for Mr Harrington proposed some Christmas games, and insisted upon every one’s joining them; and although Dora and Miss Cunningham held back, and thought themselves too old, and too dignified, they were at

length obliged to yield ; and the rest of the party were so merry that they did not notice their grave looks and slow movements. Amy enjoyed herself thoroughly ; and when her gay laugh caught Mrs Herbert's ear, it gave her more happiness than she had felt for many months, since she could now venture to dwell on the delight which Colonel Herbert would experience on seeing her so entirely what he could most have desired his child to be. Dora was almost jealous as she noticed the regard which Amy attracted, and wondered what the secret could be. Perhaps, if she had followed her cousin's example, and given up a seat to Mary Warner when she was tired, and assisted Hester Stanley when her sandal broke, and soothed one of the children when she fell down and was frightened, she too might have been a favourite ; but without intending to be unkind, she managed so openly to show her dislike to what was going on, that every one endeavoured to keep aloof from her ; and if they did speak, the answer was so cold, and the manner so proud, that the wish to make another attempt was impossible.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN Amy met her new acquaintance the next morning, after having thought them over attentively while she was dressing, she had quite decided on the one she liked best. Julia Stanley had at first amused her so much, and was so very lively and good-tempered, that it seemed impossible not to give the preference to her ; but even then there was something in her quick manner and hasty expressions which rather annoyed Amy's feelings, when contrasted with Miss Morton's gentleness and refinement ; and in the course of the evening, as she observed her more narrowly, her conduct to Miss Cunningham had struck her as peculiarly disagreeable. It required but very little time to perceive Miss Cunningham's deficiencies ; and Julia, who was remarkably quick and clever, had not been in her company for half an hour before she had discovered them ; and her great amusement was to turn everything she said into ridicule. For the first few minutes Amy had been amused ; but afterwards an endeavour of Emily Morton's to check some satirical observations, had shown her that she was wrong ; and a sense of polite-

ness soon made her aware that Julia allowed cleverness and high spirits to carry her beyond the bounds of propriety. When Dora gave Miss Cunningham what Frank would have called 'a set down,' it was done in a lady-like way, as far as manner was concerned. She delighted in saying the most pointed things in the most pointed tone, yet she would on no account have neglected the little attentions which Miss Cunningham's position demanded; but Julia Stanley, feeling herself infinitely superior to Lord Rochford's daughter in intellect and accomplishments, considered that she was, on this account, freed from any demands upon her politeness; and had made no scruple of pushing into a room before her, interrupting her when speaking, and endeavouring to show that she did not consider her as entitled to any respect or attention. All this was peculiarly disagreeable to Amy, who, having always lived with persons who were polite upon Christian principles, could not in the least comprehend the rudeness of self-conceit; and if Julia had offended her in one way, her sister's manner had been equally unpleasant in another. She had been Miss Cunningham's shadow and echo; she had followed her from place to place, admiring her dress and her ornaments, and begging her to describe Rochford Park, and hinting how much she should like to see it; and once or twice she had turned to Amy to extort her admiration also, when sincerity had obliged her entirely to differ.

A little of the same flattery had also been bestowed upon Dora, but it was received so coolly, that there was no temptation to repeat it a second time; for Dora, though she loved praise and flattery, still required it to be administered delicately, through the medium of a third person; and fancied herself insensible to it, because she never encouraged any one to tell her, in direct terms, that she was beautiful and clever. Mary Warner's manner resembled neither; it was not quite so polished as Amy would have liked, but it was simple and straightforward. She had never seen any place so beautiful as Emmerton, and she said so plainly; but she also said that she thought there were too many trees about it, and she should have preferred the house being built higher. It was the same with everything else—she expressed her opinion when asked without reserve; but she did not, like Julia, intrude disagreeable observations uncalled for, nor, like Hester, pretend to see beauties where there was nothing to admire. The uprightness of her father's character seemed to have descended to her; and Amy willingly forgave any little

awkwardness of manner when she saw Mary's firmness and simplicity ; while even Dora was rather won by the unconcern with which she listened to Miss Cunningham's impertinences, and the openness with which she acknowledged the inferiority of her own home to Emmerton—apparently thinking it a matter of indifference whether she lived in a large house or a small one. It was a point of character which Dora could appreciate and admire, though it was not one she thought it necessary to imitate. But Miss Cunningham felt very differently ; and her good-humour was not at all increased by the failure of her endeavours to inspire both Julia and Mary with awe and admiration ; and to complete her discomfort, when breakfast was over, Miss Morton gently proposed her practising for half-an-hour ; adding that Lord Rochford had again mentioned the subject, and begged that she would assist her in perfecting the piece she had been trying, so that it might be played in the evening. Miss Cunningham did not speak, but she looked her thoughts, and yet she did not venture to rebel ; for Lord Rochford, with all his fondness, had some peculiarities ; and the arrangement of his daughter's studies was his peculiar hobby. It seemed, however, as if she had secretly resolved that the pleasures of a London journey should not be marred by any progress she might make under Miss Morton's tuition ; and bad as her performance had been before, it was much worse this morning. Miss Morton, with unwearied patience, corrected her false notes, asked her to repeat the difficult passages, and showed her again and again how they were to be played ; but the long, stiff fingers appeared to possess some innate spirit of obstinacy ; they would move exactly in the way in which they should not have moved ; they would play sharps for flats, and turn crotchets into quavers, and minims into crotchets ; until Amy, who, with the exception of Julia Stanley, was the only person present besides, wondered how it was possible for Miss Morton to persevere, and Julia, after a pretended attempt to conceal her amusement, laughed aloud. Miss Cunningham heard the laugh, and felt it keenly, and forgetting everything but her annoyance, she jumped up from her seat, closed the book, and without speaking, rushed out of the room.

‘Well ! that is delightful,’ exclaimed Julia ; ‘I would have laughed before, if I had thought it would bring matters to a conclusion.’

Amy wished to say something, but she felt painfully shy, for

she had begun to dread Julia's satire ; and, happily for her, Emily Morton spoke instead.

'I should be very sorry,' she said, 'to believe you in earnest, you would hardly acknowledge so openly that you took pleasure in hurting the feelings of another.'

'Only she took pleasure in hurting my ears,' replied Julia.

'Not intentionally,' said Miss Morton ; 'but I am sure you cannot really mean what you say ; you must be sorry for having given pain.'

'Miss Cunningham is so very silly,' persisted Julia, who was never willing to confess herself in the wrong ; 'it really is impossible to help laughing at her. You know there can be no harm in being amused at people's folly.'

'I cannot agree with you at all,' said Emily ; 'and as to Miss Cunningham's sense, it is not her own choice to be less clever than others.'

'To be sure not,' exclaimed Julia, pertly ; 'who would be stupid if they could help it ? But it does not make people at all the less absurd, because it is not their own fault.'

'There again I must differ from you,' replied Emily. 'It makes all the difference possible. Self-conceit, and vanity, and pride may be ridiculous, but not mere deficiency of understanding ; it is the appointment of God, just as much as poverty or illness may be ; and I think, from something I heard you say yesterday, you would not be at all inclined to laugh at any one who had less money than yourself.'

'Oh no ! certainly not,' said Julia ; 'but cleverness is quite a different thing. I do so like bright, clever people ; and I do so delight in laughing at stupid ones. All the world thinks more of cleverness than of anything else.'

'But it does not follow that all the world are right,' replied Emily.

'But a great many strict people that I know think so,' said Julia. 'I very often hear some friends of ours say—such a person is not quite right, but then he is so clever ; and it does make up for a great many things ; you must own that.'

'Indeed I cannot own it,' replied Emily : 'I do not see that it makes up for anything.'

'But don't you like it ?' asked Julia, in a tone of great surprise.

'Yes, very much—just as I like to see a pretty face, or to listen to beautiful music ; but I do not esteem it. I mean,' she added, observing that Julia continued silent from astonishment,

‘that I do not think it forms part of a person’s character, any more than his houses or his clothes do.’

‘But have you no value at all for it?’ said Julia.

‘Yes,’ replied Emily; ‘and so I have for riches—both may be made the instruments of good; but I do not value a person who is rich, because he is rich—neither do I value a person who is clever, because he is clever. If the rich man turns his riches to good account, I value him for his generosity and self-denial; and if the clever man uses his talents well, I value him because I see he is trying to serve God; but I should have just as much esteem for a poor man, or a man with inferior understanding, if they were equally good.’

‘But,’ said Julia, ‘all the celebrated people one reads of were not good, and yet there is just as much fuss made about them now as if they were angels—every one talks of them and praises them.’

‘Yes,’ replied Miss Morton, gravely, and then paused as if lost in her own thoughts.

‘What were you going to say?’ asked Amy.

‘I did not like to say what was in my mind,’ replied Emily; ‘it is so very painful; but, you know, the opinions of men can be nothing when a person is dead.’

Julia seemed struck with the observation, but did not speak, for she began to feel ashamed, and was endeavouring to summon courage to confess herself in the wrong. ‘I wish you would go on talking,’ she said, after the silence had continued for several minutes; ‘but then you think me so rude that perhaps you will not take the trouble.’

‘It is not what I think, but what Miss Cunningham thinks, which is of importance,’ replied Miss Morton; ‘you have not been rude to me.’

‘Well! I was not quite polite perhaps, only really I could not help it. Shall I beg her pardon?’

‘No!’ exclaimed Emily, ‘pray do not do that; it would only make matters worse, because you must own then that you thought her ridiculous.’

‘But what shall I do?’ asked Julia.

‘Will you let me tell you without thinking I am interfering?’ said Emily.

‘Oh yes, pray do. You know, at school every one speaks their mind, so I am quite accustomed to it.’

‘Well, then! I should recommend you to begin by keeping a strict guard over yourself for the rest of the day, that you may

not be guilty of the same fault again, and not to force yourself upon Miss Cunningham, but to show her quietly a few little attentions ; and if she is proud and annoyed, to try and feel that it is only what you have brought upon yourself, and therefore not to be angry with her.'

'But that is not the least in my way,' said Julia ; 'I could go just at this minute and say I am sorry, because I am in the humour ; and I should be rather glad to make it up and be friends again, though she is so silly ; but as for going on all day paying little attentions to a person who has not a single idea in her head, is what I never did and never can do.'

'Never will, you mean,' replied Miss Morton. 'We often say *can*, when we ought to say *will*.'

'Well ! can or will,' exclaimed Julia ; 'it is all the same. Only if I may beg Miss Cunningham's pardon now, I don't care ; but if I must not do that, she must take her chance ; and if she makes herself ridiculous, I must laugh at her.'

'Because you think yourself cleverer,' said Miss Morton ; 'is not that the reason ?'

Julia blushed deeply. She was not accustomed to have her self-conceit brought before her so plainly, and yet she was too candid not to see the truth of what was said.

'I do not mean to pain you,' continued Miss Morton, very kindly. 'Perhaps it is not my place to interfere ; but you promised not to be annoyed ; and you must forgive me if I remind you, that in the sight of God the most trifling act of self-denial from a really high motive—I mean, of course, from a wish to please Him—is infinitely more valuable than the cleverest thing that has ever been said or done since the world was made.'

Still Julia was silent—her cleverness did not at that moment come to her aid ; and after gazing attentively upon the fire, playing with the ornaments on the mantelpiece, and turning over the leaves of one or two books, she found herself so very uncomfortable, that, hastily exclaiming she must go and look for her sister, she left Amy and Miss Morton alone.

'Are you vexed ?' asked Amy, as soon as the door was closed. 'You look so.'

'I am rather,' said Miss Morton, 'for I am half afraid I have done more harm than good ; and I am hurt especially about Miss Cunningham, because I know it was very disagreeable to her to have any lesson at all, and such a one as this will make her dislike it more than ever.'

‘But not you,’ observed Amy; ‘she cannot blame you for another person’s rudeness.’

‘Only it is difficult,’ said Miss Morton, ‘to feel kindly towards those who have been the cause of placing us in awkward situations; and I do not suspect I have ever been a favourite with Miss Cunningham.’

‘I wish Miss Stanley had kept to her own room this morning,’ said Amy. ‘I am afraid she will spoil our pleasure all day.’

‘Oh no! she will soon forget it all; and I do not think she will take Miss Cunningham’s anger much to heart; it will rather amuse her than otherwise.’

‘I should not like her to be amused at me,’ said Amy; ‘she frightens me dreadfully. I felt just now as if I could not have ventured to speak before her.’

‘I must give you a lecture too,’ said Emily, smiling. ‘Why should you be afraid of people merely because they are clever, and say sharp things? It is making cleverness of as much consequence as Miss Stanley does; besides being a dangerous feeling, and one which often prevents us from doing our duty.’

‘Ah! but,’ said Amy, ‘I cannot feel quite as you do. I always have thought a great deal about it, and longed to be very clever myself, and for every one to admire me, and look up to me.’

‘And I have done the same,’ said Emily. ‘I will not say that I never do so now; but it is very contrary to what the Bible commands.’

‘Do you really think so?’ inquired Amy, looking much distressed. ‘Yet it seems so natural; and cleverness is different from riches, or rank, or anything of that kind.’

‘Can you recollect any part of the Bible in which it is said that God takes pleasure in it?’ asked Emily.

‘There is a great deal about wisdom in the Book of Proverbs,’ answered Amy; ‘and it is said to be better than anything else.’

‘Yes,’ replied Emily; ‘but then, you know, we ought to compare different parts of the Bible together, if we wish to know its real meaning. And there is a verse at the end of a very beautiful chapter in the Book of Job, which tells us what wisdom really is. Perhaps you may remember it. It says, “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” Now, a poor man, who cannot even read, may have just as much of this wisdom as the most learned man that ever lived.’

‘Then,’ said Amy, ‘there is no use in trying to learn things.’

‘Indeed,’ replied Miss Morton, ‘there is. It is our duty to improve the understanding God has given us to the utmost, by exercising it in every right way. Our Saviour’s parable of the talents gives a most impressive warning to us on this point, though talents there mean likewise advantages of every kind ; and besides, the more we know, the more we are able to teach others.’

Amy still looked unconvinced, and Emily continued, ‘You will see what I mean, if you will think of being clever in the same way as you do of being rich. We all know that it is the way of the world to value people for their money, but common sense tells us that it is very absurd ; and yet no one would deny that riches may be made of great use to our fellow-creatures, though they do not make us in the smallest degree more acceptable in the eye of God. I wish I could explain myself more clearly. Perhaps, if I were very clever, I might be able to do it ; and then, you see, my knowledge would be of use to you, though it would not make me either better or worse in myself.’

‘I think that is clever,’ said Amy, laughing ; ‘for I can understand you much better now, though I am afraid I shall never learn to think rightly about everything.’

‘You must not say that,’ said Emily. ‘You know you are not very old yet ; and if we thought about everything rightly at the beginning of our life, it would not be necessary for us to have so many years to learn in. As long as we are not standing still, we may be tolerably happy, though we do happen to blunder in the dark way.’

‘I think I am always blundering,’ said Amy ; ‘at least I know I am always wishing for something which mamma and you tell me I ought not to wish for. But I think it is because I hear Dora and Margaret and Miss Cunningham talking so much about such things. You know Dora makes a great deal of being clever, and Miss Cunningham is always speaking of rank and riches, and Margaret is so pleased to be pretty. I know it is really all nothing ; but when I hear them I cannot help longing for it all, and thinking that it must be of consequence.’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Morton, ‘it is very natural. This place is to you just what the world is to grown-up people.’

‘I remember,’ replied Amy, ‘thinking something just like that the very first night my cousins came ; but I did not imagine, she added, ‘that there would be any one in my world like you.’

Miss Morton could have answered, with truth, that she had never expected to meet with any one like Amy at Emmerton ; but at that moment Dora and the rest of the party entered, and Miss Cunningham with them.

‘Must you go?’ whispered Amy, as Miss Morton prepared to leave the room.

Emily replied that she had letters to write, which would keep her engaged the whole morning ; and Amy scarcely wished her to remain, when she observed the expression of Miss Cunningham’s face, and saw that her good-humour was by no means restored.

It was not indeed a very easy task at any time ; and Julia Stanley seemed resolved that this morning it should be more difficult than ever. She had given up the idea of confessing her fault, and trying to make amends, because she could not have her own way as to the manner in which it should be done, and had become angry with herself, and, as a natural consequence, angry with every one else. There was, in fact, a regular feud between her and Miss Cunningham ; and Dora soon saw that to preserve peace would be a difficult matter. Julia’s manner was more sharp and abrupt than ever, as she took every opportunity of repeating Miss Cunningham’s words, and turning them into ridicule ; while Miss Cunningham, on her part, endeavoured to make sneers and scornful looks as effective as words. Amy was very uncomfortable, and once or twice tried to divert their attention by talking to the younger children, and making them bring their dolls and playthings to the table where the elder girls were working. But her efforts were in vain ; and, as a last hope, she ventured to suggest to Dora, that perhaps it might be pleasant if some one were to read out. The idea was the greatest possible relief to poor Dora, for all her antipathy to strange school-girls, and three days’ visits, was returning in full force ; and having asked, as a matter of form, whether any one would dislike it, she quickly produced half-a-dozen volumes to choose from.

The choice being settled, the next question to be decided was, who should read. There was a general burst of excuses as the inquiry was made. Every one would read, only there was a piece of work to be finished, or a drawing to be begun, or some beads to be threaded, or they were so soon tired that it was quite useless to begin, or they were suffering from a cold and hoarseness, which would make it disagreeable for the rest to listen. Dora put down the book on the table, considering it, as

a matter of course, that she should not be obliged to do it. She had seldom been called on to give up her own will for others, but had always ordered and managed, and told others their duty ; and when this was done, her part was considered finished. So, in the present instance, she had decided it would be a good thing to read, and had chosen the book, and supposed that some one would easily be found willing to amuse the rest. But Dora was mistaken.

The only person who had not excused herself was the only one whose excuse would have been really a good one. Poor Amy's heart beat fast as she thought that it might fall to her lot to read. She had never read aloud to any one but her mamma ; and she was the youngest of the party ; and, moreover, she knew that in the book which had been fixed on there were some long French quotations, which must be pronounced or translated, either alternative being equally disagreeable. 'I wish I could read,' she whispered to Margaret, who was sitting next her ; 'but I am so frightened.'

'Oh ! it does not signify,' answered Margaret, aloud ; 'there is no occasion for us to trouble ourselves—Emily Morton will come directly ; I have known her go on for hours when mamma has been ill.'

'Yes,' said Dora, feeling slightly uncomfortable as she spoke, 'she is much more used to it than we are. Rose, go and tell Emily Morton that we should be very much obliged if she could read out to us this morning whilst we are working.'

The message was more civil than it would have been some months before ; and Dora's conscience was rather relieved ; but to Amy it seemed only selfish and thoughtless.

'Miss Morton told me she had letters to write, Dora,' she said, timidly. 'Don't you think reading to us would be an interruption to her ?'

'Not more than giving us our usual lessons,' observed Margaret ; 'it is only occupying the same time in a different way.'

'But,' replied Amy, 'indeed I think the letters are of consequence ; and the post goes out so early.'

'Well, then, Amy,' said Dora, rather sharply, 'if you will insist upon our not sending for Emily, you must read yourself, for you are the only one of us all who is not busy.'

Amy was busy finishing a purse to be given to Mrs Walton on her birthday ; but anything was better than to allow Miss Morton's time to be intruded on ; and although the slight trem-

bling of her hand, and the bright crimson spot on her cheek, showed the greatness of the effort, she did manage to begin, and even to get through the first long French sentence without breaking down. Dora listened to the words, but they made very little impression; she was thinking all the time of her own selfishness, and how easy it was to make good resolutions, and how very difficult to keep them. It was only on that very day that she had been reflecting on her conduct to Miss Morton, and had determined to be more thoughtful for her comfort; and now, on the first temptation, she had weakly given way, and, but for Amy, would have sacrificed Miss Morton's whole morning merely to gratify her own fancy for work. Happily, Dora's was not a mind to be contented with the bare acknowledgment of having been wrong; it was too active and energetic to rest in fruitless wishes for amendment; and now, finding that Amy's voice was becoming weak, and that she read with difficulty, she threw down her work just as she was about to put the finishing stroke to it, and offered to read instead. It was but a trifling action, but it made Dora feel happier than she had been before; it proved to herself that she was in earnest; and when she had made one endeavour it was much easier to make another. Her manner grew softer, her thoughtfulness for others increased; and before the morning was over, she had even taken Miss Cunningham's part against Julia Stanley, when she had made an observation on the book they were reading, and had given up her seat near the fire, fearing she might be cold. The book was so interesting, and the oriel-room so comfortable, that no one thought of the time or the weather; and when Mrs Harrington made her appearance with Mrs Danvers, and begged them all to go out before dinner that they might not lose the best part of the day, there was a slight murmur of disapprobation. Mrs Danvers sympathised, and pitied, and declared the room looked so warm and cheerful, it was almost impossible to leave it; now she had once found her way there, she should be a frequent visitor.

'I always think young people manage best when left to themselves,' said Mrs Harrington. 'Dora, you must be quick, and go out; and as many of your young friends as choose to go with you had better get ready also.'

The sending them out did not seem like leaving them to themselves; but Mrs Harrington's manner prevented almost every one from differing from her; and Mrs Danvers, who was rather young, and soon awed, said nothing, but began fondling her little

girls, and proposing to stay and play with them if they liked it better than going for a walk ; whilst Dora, who knew the exact meaning of every word and tone of her mother's, hastily put up her work, and prepared to obey.

CHAPTER XX.

‘**M**MARGARET,’ said Miss Cunningham, who had joined the walking party merely from not knowing how to employ her time satisfactorily while they were away, ‘I want you to talk to me a little ; never mind the rest, they will manage very well ; and really what I have to say is of consequence.’

‘Is it, indeed?’ replied Margaret, who dearly loved a little mystery ; ‘but you must be quick, for Dora said so much to me, before we came out, about being attentive to them all.’

‘It cannot signify what Dora says ; she is not to rule every one ; at least I am sure she shall not rule me. But what I wanted to say to you was about London. I talked to papa this morning ; and he says, after all, he thinks there is a chance of your going.’

‘Oh no ! he cannot really mean it ; mamma was so very positive the other night.’

‘Yes, I know that ; but it is something about Mrs Herbert which makes the difference. Your papa thinks her very ill, and he wants to have advice for her ; and if Dr Bailey does not give a good report, he will try and persuade her to go, and then all the family are to go too.’

‘Well, that would be delightful ; but the time would not suit you—it will be so soon.’

‘But if you were to go at once, papa would not object to being there earlier himself, for he is determined that we shall have lessons together.’

‘So then it is all settled,’ said Margaret, her eyes sparkling with pleasure. ‘To be sure, I am sorry for poor Amy, but I daresay there is nothing very much the matter ; and with a London physician Aunt Herbert will soon get well.’

‘I don’t think it is settled at all,’ answered Miss Cunningham ; ‘for I can tell you one thing, Margaret,—I never will go to London to be pestered by Miss Morton ; she must stay at home,

or I must. If you had only seen how she behaved this morning; she found as much fault with my playing as if I had been a mere baby.'

'But,' said Margaret, looking much perplexed, 'there is no help for it; she must go with us; only it does not follow that you should learn of her.'

'It does follow, though,' replied Miss Cunningham, angrily; 'how can you be so stupid, Margaret? I have told you a hundred and fifty times before, that if papa once has a thing in his head, not all the world can drive it out; and he said this morning that I should have lessons of her besides the other masters; but I won't—no, that I won't.'

'That is right,' said Margaret; 'if you make a fuss about it, you will be sure to have your own way.'

'But my way is to stay at home; I can do that if I choose, for mamma will like it; but I will never go near London to be laughed at by rude, vulgar people as I was this morning; so you may manage as well as you can without me.'

Miss Cunningham walked on a few steps with her head raised, rapidly twisting the bag she held in her hand—a sure sign that she was working herself into a passion. Margaret followed, appearing very downcast, and feeling that Lucy's determination would prove the destruction of all her bright castles in the air. London, with only her own family, would be nearly as bad as Emmerton. 'What do you wish me to do?' she said, anxiously.

'Nothing,' was the reply; 'but make up your mind to go without me, for I am quite determined; I can be as obstinate as papa, sometimes.'

This could not be doubted; but it was no satisfaction to Margaret. 'It is very unkind of you, Lucy,' she said. 'You sometimes tell me you love me; and yet you don't seem inclined to put yourself in the least out of your way to please me. You know very well that there will be no pleasure in London if you are away; we shall go nowhere and see nothing.'

'Yes, I know it; but it can't be helped.'

'That odious Emily Morton!' exclaimed Margaret; 'she has been a torment in one way or another ever since she entered the house.'

'And she will never be anything else,' said Miss Cunningham; 'I wish you joy of her.'

'But is there nothing to be done?' again asked Margaret,

whilst several most impracticable plans passed quickly through her mind, all having for their object the removal of this serious obstacle to her enjoyment.

'I can see nothing,' was the answer; 'unless you can make her go and see her friends whilst you are absent.'

'I don't think she has any friends,' said Margaret, 'except an aunt, who is abroad; that is, she has never asked to go away, so I suppose she has no place to go to.'

'That makes the case a great deal worse. If she has no friends you may depend upon it you will be burdened with her for ever.'

'I believe, though,' said Margaret, 'there is a Mrs or Miss Somebody, who was her governess once, who could keep her for some time; but then, you know, it is no use talking about it; there is no chance of our being able to do anything.'

'The loss will be more yours than mine,' replied Miss Cunningham; 'it will be just the same to me next year; but you will miss everything.'

'Yes, everything,' sighed Margaret.

'You would have gone to the opera, certainly; papa would have taken you there, and you would have been out half the day shopping, and driving in the parks; and you would have seen everything, and bought anything you wished,—for, of course, your papa would have given you plenty of money to do as you liked with; and then my aunt would have taken us to some delightful parties. But it is not worth while to think about it now; because if you go for your aunt's illness, and have no one to take you about, you will be at your lessons half the day, and staying at home with her the other half; and there will be nothing to be seen, because you must choose such a very quiet part of the town for an invalid.'

'O Lucy!' said Margaret, 'I wish you would not talk so. It is very unkind; for you know it will be all your doing.'

'My doing! No, indeed I can't help it. Get rid of Miss Morton, and I will go directly. And now I have said all I wished, and so I think I shall turn back, for you told me you wanted to go to Dora; and really I have had quite enough of those school-girls this morning.'

Margaret did not press her to stay, for she was becoming very indignant; but neither was she inclined to make any exertions to be agreeable; and, soon persuading herself that the walking party had advanced too far for her to overtake them, she rather

sulkily turned back and followed Miss Cunningham, keeping, however, at a convenient distance, that she might be able to think over the conversation, and find some arguments which should induce her to break the resolution she had formed.

Amy, in the meantime, enjoyed her walk with her companions in perfect unconsciousness that anything was near to disturb her happiness. She laughed at Julia Stanley's strange stories, till she forgot by degrees she had been afraid of her; and although every tree and stone were familiar, there was a pleasure in pointing out to strangers all the beauties of the grounds, even in their wintry dress; and good-humour being proverbially infectious, the whole party returned home in all the better spirits that they had been spared Miss Cunningham's sulkiness and pride. The first news, however, that awaited Amy upon entering the house, was the information from Susan Reynolds that Mr Harrington had prevailed on her mamma to see Dr Bailey. Amy started and turned pale, and anxiously asked if her mamma were very ill.'

'Oh, dear! no,' replied Susan, frightened in her turn; 'but I thought you would be glad to know your mamma was going to see a doctor, because then, perhaps, she will get strong again.'

'Yes; but she must be worse, I am sure,' said Amy; 'she never would send for any one unless she were very ill indeed.' And without waiting to hear more, she hastily ran to Mrs Herbert's room. But her fears were soon calmed. Mrs Herbert was looking much the same as usual, and seemed in tolerable spirits, and quite laughed at Amy's alarm.

'I have only consented to see Dr Bailey,' she said, 'just to satisfy your uncle; and it was very foolish in any one to frighten you, my dear child, so unnecessarily; so now go to your dinner, and forget me, and be happy.'

'That would not be the way to be happy, mamma. I never enjoy anything till I have remembered that I can tell you about it. But are you sure you are not very ill?'

'I am quite sure that I am not feeling worse than I have done for the last six weeks,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'and I suspect the sight of your papa's handwriting would do more towards my cure than all the physicians in the world. I hoped to have heard from him by the same mail which brought the news of peace.'

'Perhaps,' said Amy, 'the letter will come to-morrow.'

‘Oh no!’ replied Mrs Herbert; ‘it is scarcely possible—I must be contented to wait. But you had better go now, Amy—there is the second dinner-bell.’

Amy left the room much relieved. A natural buoyancy of disposition seldom allowed her to be unnecessarily anxious. She was too young to form any judgment of her own respecting the state of her mother’s health; and Mrs Herbert’s assurances outweighed the passing influence of her uncle’s misgivings. She did, however, look oftener than ever to the door during the evening, with a vague expectation that her father would appear: and she persuaded Mr Cunningham to repeat again to her all he had before said of the probability of his arrival at any moment; while Mrs Herbert, also, listened eagerly, and laughed at herself for being as fanciful as Amy, though her heart beat quickly at the slightest unusual sound in the house.

‘There is the second day happily over, Amy,’ said Dora, as she bade her good night: ‘and now I have no more fears; we shall do very well to-morrow. Frank has been proposing for us all to assist in ornamenting the outer saloon for the conjurer, and Mary Warner can show us how to make artificial flowers—so we shall have plenty of occupation; and in the evening I really think we may make up a quadrille. You know there are several people coming besides; and Emily Morton will play as long as we like. The only thing that worries me is about Julia and Lucy Cunningham; they are exactly like cat and dog.’

‘I daresay we can manage to keep them separate,’ replied Amy. ‘If Margaret will take care of Miss Cunningham, there will be no difficulty at all.’

‘But they will get together,’ said Dora. ‘And really, though I do cordially dislike—not hate, remember, Amy,—though I do cordially dislike Lucy Cunningham, yet I must say Julia behaves infamously; she has been snapping at her the whole evening; and, moreover, almost laughed at Mr Cunningham to her face.’

‘Oh no!’ exclaimed Amy, ‘she could not do that; it would be so dreadfully unfeeling.’

‘But she could, though; she could do that or anything else that came to her head. You know she sets up for being clever, and thinks she may have everything her own way. I wish you would talk to her, Amy.’

‘Me!’ repeated Amy, in a tone of the utmost surprise; ‘you are laughing at me, Dora.’

‘No, indeed, I never was more in earnest in my life. I heard

her say to-day she thought you knew more of what was right than any one else in the house, and had more courage too.'

Amy was silent from astonishment.

'It is your quiet way, Amy, which strikes her so, I am sure,' continued Dora; 'you never make a fuss about being good-natured, and yet you always do everything for everybody; and I am sure they must all see it, and love it too—at least if they are like me. There is always a difficulty when any one else is good-natured, they seem to have achieved something.'

'You know, Dora,' replied Amy, gravely, 'that I always ask you not to say such things to me, but you will forget. I don't mean that I don't like it, because I do very much; but mamma would rather I should not hear them, and so it vexes me.'

'Vex you!' exclaimed Dora, earnestly; 'if you knew half I would do to please you, Amy, you would not talk of my vexing you, at least not willingly; I never could have believed, before I came to Emmerton, how painful I should find it to be unkind to any one; but now I can never forgive myself when I have been cross to you.'

The tears rose to Amy's eyes as she wished her cousin good night and hastened away; but the expression of Dora's affection amply rewarded her for any impatience she had repressed, or self-denial she had practised.

CHAPTER XXI.

DORA was quite satisfied the next morning when she saw the whole party engaged in decorating the saloon for the evening's amusement. Frank and his companions, indeed, were at times rather more troublesome than useful, from the very zeal with which they engaged in the work. They would put up boughs of evergreens where they were not needed, and insist on driving in a superabundance of nails; and they would also strew the floor with enormous branches, which only served as stumbling-blocks for every one who moved. But these were minor evils; all talked fast, and laughed merrily, and looked happy; and those who have ever had the responsibility of entertaining others, must be aware that no symptoms can be so encouraging as these. Miss Cunningham might perhaps have been con-

sidered an exception; for there was something like a sneer on her lip, as she seated herself by Margaret's side at the table that had been placed for the flower-makers, and began turning over the collection of roses, tulips, and lilies of every form and colour, which far out-shone in variety any that nature has produced. 'I should like to know,' she said, 'what is the use of your all wasting time in this way? What will be the good of it when you have done?'

'It is for our pleasure,' replied Julia Stanley, sharply; 'and as to wasting time, why it is better than doing nothing.'

'Such common, vulgar work, too,' continued Miss Cunningham; 'and all for a conjurer.'

'Who said we were working for the conjurer?' asked Julia. 'I said we were working to please ourselves.'

'Then it seems to me very absurd to find pleasure in such nonsense,' said Miss Cunningham.

'That is as people think; I see no difference between cutting out flowers and threading beads, which I think you were doing all yesterday; and if you do not like the work, you need not look at it.'

'I am sure I do not want to look at that or the conjurer, or anything else,' said Miss Cunningham; 'tricks are far too vulgar to please me.'

'But what do you mean by vulgar?' asked Dora.

'Vulgar?—why vulgar means—every one knows what it means.'

'No,' said Mary Warner, in her quick, decided tone; 'every one does not know what it means, because no two people in the world think quite alike about it.'

'Dear me! how silly you are!' exclaimed Miss Cunningham; 'vulgar?—vulgar means common, I suppose.'

'Then the conjurer is not vulgar, because his tricks are uncommon,' said Julia.

Miss Cunningham bit her lips and was silent; and Amy, who was becoming interested in the discussion, turned to Miss Morton, who had just entered the room, and asked her to tell them what things she thought were vulgar.

'What a request!' said Julia; 'Miss Morton might go on all day, and she would not be able to answer it. You have not been taught to ask questions, that is quite clear.'

Poor Amy looked confused, and said, timidly, that she thought she had expressed herself badly.

‘I know what you mean, though,’ replied Miss Morton, who had of late ventured more openly to express her opinions, especially when called forth by Amy; ‘I don’t think anything vulgar in itself, but only when it is not befitting the rank and station of the person concerned.’

Miss Cunningham opened her eyes widely, and looked as if she would willingly have understood; and Amy begged Miss Morton to explain herself more clearly.

‘Conjuring tricks,’ she asked, ‘are they vulgar?’

Miss Morton smiled. ‘I hope,’ she said, ‘you are not growing too proud to be amused; why should such a notion enter your head?’

‘Miss Cunningham thinks them so,’ replied Amy.

‘If Miss Cunningham were to exhibit them herself to any people that might choose to come and look at them,’ answered Miss Morton, ‘I should have reason to think her vulgar; but the poor conjurer is a common person who gains his livelihood by his ingenuity. There can be nothing more vulgar in his exhibition of tricks (if they are proper ones, I mean), than in a carpenter’s making a table, or a tailor’s making a coat.’

‘Really,’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham, ‘you have most extraordinary ideas. I exhibit conjuring tricks, indeed? I wonder how the notion could ever have entered your head.’

‘It is strange,’ said Julia Stanley, quietly: ‘conjurers are generally clever.’

Miss Cunningham did not immediately perceive what was intended, but Hester did, and in her endeavour to be polite in contrast to her sister, contrived to make the meaning perfectly clear. ‘I do not see why you should think that, Julia,’ she said, ‘of course a person of Miss Cunningham’s rank would never do anything of the kind, but it is wrong to say she could not do it.’

‘No one said so, of course,’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham.

‘Oh dear! no,’ replied Julia; ‘all that I said was, that conjurers were clever.’

Amy looked at Miss Cunningham, and saw that for once in her life she understood; and anxious if possible to preserve peace, she returned again to the subject of vulgarity; saying she wished she could comprehend it better.

‘You will comprehend it very well when you are older and have seen more of the world,’ replied Emily; ‘but I think now if you observe what things strike you as vulgar in persons, you

will find they are always those which arise from a wish to be thought richer or cleverer, or higher in rank than they really are, or else from their having the manners and habits of a class who are inferior to themselves. Bad grammar is very natural in a labouring man, and very vulgar in a nobleman ; a splendid dress is very proper for a queen, and very vulgar for the wife of a tradesman. All persons who go out of their station, or pretend to be what they are not, must be vulgar, whether they are princes or peasants. You often hear of persons of no education, who have made great fortunes from a very low beginning, trying to vie with those born to rank and riches, and then they are laughed at as vulgar. If they had kept to their own station, they might have had precisely the same manners ; but they would have escaped ridicule, because then there would have been no pretence about them.'

'But it is in little things that I am puzzled,' said Amy. 'Are persons vulgar who make pies and puddings, and mend their own clothes?'

'To be sure they are, Amy,' said Frank, who had great notions of having every one belonging to him very refined and superior ; 'I hope you never intend to do such things, or you had better set up a dame-school at once.'

'But do you think so, too?' asked Amy, looking earnestly at Miss Morton.

'No ! indeed, I do not,' replied Emily ; 'I think the more we know of common, useful things, the better, as long as we are not ashamed of them. It is the doing them in private, and pretending to be ignorant of them in public, which constitutes the vulgarity.'

'I am always afraid of not knowing what I ought to do when I am with people,' said Amy, 'and I should be so sorry to do vulgar things.'

Miss Morton smiled, as she looked at Amy's sweet face, and listened to her peculiarly ladylike pronunciation, and thought how impossible it would be for her to appear anything but a lady.

'Oh !' said Miss Cunningham, 'it is quite out of the question for people who live always in the country to understand what things are proper and fashionable, and what are not. I should never have known myself if my aunt had not told me ; and of course she knows, because she goes out constantly in London.'

'Really,' said Julia, satirically, 'that quite surprises me ; but then I am very ignorant, I have never even been in London.'

‘Do you think I shall ever learn to be fashionable?’ asked Amy of Miss Morton.

‘I hope not,’ said Emily, regardless of Miss Cunningham’s contemptuous smile.

‘Why?’ asked Margaret, ‘do you not wish her to be lady-like?’

‘Yes,’ replied Emily; ‘but it does not follow that to be lady-like it is necessary to be fashionable. A fashionable manner is a manner put on; a really ladylike manner arises from a really ladylike mind—one is sincere, the other generally is affected; and when persons strive to be fashionable, they often end in becoming vulgar.’

‘Then what do you think we should try to be?’ asked Mary Warner.

‘Nothing,’ replied Emily; ‘those who possess a cultivated mind, and a gentle, humble disposition, need not try to be anything; they may be quite sure of not being vulgar; and as for being elegant and graceful, they will never become so by thinking about it; the very endeavour must make them constrained.’

‘But I should so like to be elegant,’ said Margaret.

‘So would many others,’ answered Emily; ‘and they would like to be beautiful too, but they cannot make themselves so. Elegance is a gift as much as beauty.’

A conscious smile passed over Margaret’s countenance; she felt that one gift at least she possessed, and the sight of Miss Cunningham’s plain face was more agreeable to her than ever; she was sure it must be such a contrast to her own.

‘Then,’ said Mary Warner, ‘you would not advise any person to imitate the manners of another?’

‘No,’ replied Emily; ‘because persons’ manners ought to suit with their minds; and as all persons have different minds, so they must, to a certain degree, have different manners. Manners should be the veil through which the mind is seen, not the covering by which it is hidden.’

‘Come, Frank!’ exclaimed Henry Dornford, who was tired of having to labour alone; ‘do leave all the young ladies to discuss their manners by themselves; it can be nothing to you, and I want you dreadfully.’

‘Coming, coming,’ said Frank, hastily, ‘only I must say one thing, that I know I can see some persons’ minds in their manners quite plainly. Yours, Dora, for instance; any one

might see you are as proud as a queen by the way you march into a room.'

'O Frank !' half whispered Amy, as she saw the angry flush on Dora's cheek, 'do not say such things as that ; you have vexed Dora, I am sure.'

'I did not mean any harm,' said Frank, 'only it is a truth ; now I will just ask every one, don't you all think I am right ?'

Poor Dora's dignity was shocked beyond expression at the idea of this public criticism ; but she tried to laugh as her only resource. Every one looked and felt awkward ; and Frank, who had spoken thoughtlessly from the impulse of the moment, wished his words unsaid. Happily Henry Dornford broke the silence by calling again to him to leave them ; and Frank this time had no wish for any more last words. Dora strove to recover her equanimity, but in vain ; she fancied every one must be thinking of and judging her, and she knew that what Frank had said was true. Perhaps, if he had expressed himself differently, her annoyance might have been less ; for she had always imagined it dignified and suitable to her position to have rather proud manners—it kept people at a distance, and made them recollect who she was, and she fancied that pride and dignity must go together. But to hear her manners discussed in her presence by school-girls and school-boys, was a very different thing ; and after a few efforts to appear unconcerned, she left the party to themselves, and retired to her own room. Amy saw by her countenance what was passing in her mind ; but she did not like to follow her, for she knew there were times when pity and sympathy would be more distasteful to Dora than anything. When her cousin was unhappy, Amy had no hesitation in endeavouring to comfort her ; but when she had done wrong, it would have seemed interfering improperly to take any notice of it, for Amy never forgot that Dora was her superior in age, and in the knowledge of many things she had acquired by being the eldest of the family, and by having been brought forward far beyond her years.

Dora's absence was not much regretted, and the work went on so quickly and merrily, that the sound of the dinner-bell was pronounced by all to be very unwelcome ; but dinner was quickly ended, and Henry Dornford again summoned them to put the finishing stroke to the whole, and to say if anything more were needed. The question went round in rotation ; and, being a little tired, they felt no inclination to suggest further improvements.

But Amy, perceiving that Dora was not there, immediately proposed that her opinion should be asked.

‘Oh, nonsense!’ exclaimed Margaret. ‘What will it signify what Dora says? We cannot all set to work again to please her. Why will you always interfere, Amy?’

‘I did not mean to interfere indeed, Margaret,’ replied Amy; ‘but you know Dora never likes anything to be decided without her, and she has been the chief manager of this.’

‘She is the chief manager of everything, I think,’ said Miss Cunningham; ‘at least, she would be if she could.’

‘But she is the eldest,’ said Amy.

‘She is not so old as I am; and if she were, I do not see why we are all to give up our taste to hers. If she wants to give an opinion, why does she go away?’

‘She did not know that it would be all finished so soon, perhaps,’ answered Amy. ‘I wish I might go and tell her.’

‘There is no reason against it that I can see,’ said Frank; ‘only she must not expect us to begin working again, merely for her pleasure.’

‘I daresay,’ replied Amy, ‘she will think it does very nicely; but I am sure she would like to be asked, and it would be a pity she should be vexed twice in the day.’

Frank’s good-nature immediately took the hint; and without saying another word, he ran off himself to find Dora, and, if possible to soothe her feelings by making her the principal person in the business. A few months before, Dora’s irritation would have continued a whole day after such a severe trial to her temper, and solitude would only have increased her annoyance, by giving her more time to reflect upon its cause; but since she had known Amy, and could contrast her gentleness, meekness, and constant cheerfulness, with things in her own character so much the reverse, she had for the first time felt her defects, and longed to correct them; and having earnestly and resolutely determined to realise those longings by putting in practice the rules she had laid down to aid her improvement, she was now beginning to feel all the benefit of them; for she had learned, as the first step, to distrust her own powers, and to ask for a higher strength. Happily Dora was gifted with an energy of mind which prevented her from delaying her duty when once it had been clearly pointed out; and the time spent by herself had been so well employed, that all traces of irritation had vanished even before dinner, very much to Frank’s and Margaret’s astonishment; and

now, with apparently the most perfect good-humour, she gave her opinion as to what was required to complete the adornment of the saloon; and then, finding that no one was disposed to agree with her, relinquished her own idea, and declared herself willing to abide by the decision of the majority.

Amy noticed the change, and asked herself whether she could have been equally good-humoured; and Margaret remarked it also, in so loud a whisper to Miss Cunningham, that it was impossible for Dora not to overhear it. The heightened colour told in an instant that she did; but she had conquered her temper once that day, and the second trial was comparatively easy; it required but one moment of recollection, and a slight effort at self-control, and to all appearance she was perfectly unruffled.

The party separated almost immediately afterwards; and Amy went to her mother's room. Mr Harrington was with her, and they were talking, as usual, of India, Colonel Herbert, and the probability of hearing from him. The same things had been repeated again and again; but this subject was now the only one in which Mrs Herbert could take any real interest, and her brother's affection prevented him from ever feeling it wearisome.

'And do you really think, then,' were the words Amy heard as she entered the room, 'do you really think that it is possible there may be a letter by the last mail?'

'Only just possible,' replied Mr Harrington, 'as this place is so retired, and my own letters sometimes go astray; but you must feel that such a hope as that is a mere shadow. I earnestly wish you could make up your mind not to think about it. The anxiety is doing you more harm than you can imagine.'

'Dr Bailey will be here this evening, I suppose,' said Mrs Herbert, with a smile; 'and then he will set your mind at ease about me. I have felt so much better since I have had something like a certain hope to build on, that I have very little fear for myself now.'

'But the suspense,' replied Mr Harrington; 'no mind can bear that, and the constant dwelling upon one subject. If you could only divert your thoughts, I am sure it will help you.'

'I do try, indeed I do,' said Mrs Herbert; 'for your sake, and for Amy's, I make the effort continually; but the one idea will remain; and even when I believe I am interested in what I am doing, I find that the slightest unusual sound, or the sudden opening of a door, will make my heart beat violently, and bring on the faintness to which I am subject, so as completely to take

away my strength. But I am not going to give way to this, you may be quite sure,' she added, seeing that Mr Harrington looked very grave; 'and to prove it, I intend to make Amy tell me all she has been doing this afternoon.'

Mr Harrington went away, and Amy did her utmost to amuse her mother, and found so much to relate, that she had scarcely time to dress before she was summoned to tea. The conjurer was expected to arrive about seven o'clock, and Dora had arranged everything satisfactorily to her own wishes, with Mrs Harrington's consent, for their having a dance when the exhibition was over; and even Miss Cunningham condescended to say, on hearing it, that she expected to have a very pleasant evening.

Amy rather shrank from the idea of dancing before strangers, and wished that the few persons invited for the evening would find some reason for staying at home; but her anticipations of pleasure were still great, and when the party adjourned to the saloon to await the conjurer's arrival, there were few whose eyes sparkled as brightly, or whose laugh was as joyous as hers.

'Who has ever seen a conjurer?' asked Henry Dornford, as they stood round the fire.

Mary Warner was the only one who had been so fortunate, and the exhibition she had witnessed was but an indifferent one.

'Well, then!' exclaimed Henry, proud of his superior knowledge, 'I advise you all to take care of yourselves, or you will lose your senses.'

'Why should we do that?' said Julia. 'Is the conjurer going to steal them? I shall congratulate him on the treasure he will get from some of us at least;' and she looked round to see if Miss Cunningham were near; but she had not yet made her appearance, and Julia's satire was lost.

'I really am afraid for the little ones,' continued Henry. 'Conjurers do such wonderful things, and they generally dress themselves up in an outlandish way; and the one I saw talked a sort of double Dutch, just to make us think that he came from Timbuctoo.'

'If that be a qualification for a conjurer,' said Julia, 'we had better get poor Mr Cunningham to exhibit. I defy any one to know what part of the world he comes from.'

'So he would make a capital conjurer,' said Henry Dornford; 'and he would not want a mask either; for he can twist his face

into a hundred and twenty different shapes in a minute. Just look, I am sure I can do it exactly like him.'

'Ah! but can you talk too?' said Julia: 'it is nothing without the stammering and stuttering.'

'But he does not stammer,' observed Mary Warner.

'Never mind,' said Henry. 'Listen—yet wait—I will go out of the room, and come in again in his blind way, with a glass to my eye, and then speak, and you shall tell me if you would have known us apart.'

Julia laughed heartily at the idea, and Henry was just going when he was stopped by Amy.

'I wish,' she said, timidly, 'you would not do it, because'——and here she paused.

'Because what?' asked Henry, in great astonishment.

'Because,' said Amy, more firmly, 'it is not quite right, is it, to laugh at people and mimic them?'

'Not right to laugh at people!' exclaimed Henry; 'what a girl's notion that is!—why, half the fun in the world would be gone if we were not allowed to laugh at any one.'

'I don't think that makes it right,' said Amy.

'Oh nonsense, nonsense!' was the reply. 'I will soon teach you to think differently from that; now, just look at me, and see if it is not capital sport.'

Henry ran to the door, and then re-entered, with a manner and voice so exactly like Mr Cunningham's, that all burst into a loud laugh;—all, except Amy, who tried very hard to prevent even a smile; and when she found this was impossible, began blaming herself, and anxiously repeating her request that Henry would not do it.

'It is quite Mr Cunningham's misfortune,' she said; 'and he is so good and kind—he has been so very kind to me.'

The peculiar sound which always preceded Mr Cunningham's sentences was heard when Amy had spoken, and some one said 'Thank you;' but it was not Henry Dornford, for he looked completely frightened, and fixed his eyes on the door. No one ventured to utter another word, and in the silence retreating footsteps were heard along the passage.

'Do you think he heard all we were saying?' asked Henry.

'Don't say we,' replied Hester Stanley; 'you know no one had anything to do with it but yourself. Why did you not take care to shut the door?'

'I daresay he only caught the last words,' said Julia; 'and if

so, there is no harm done ; besides, listeners never hear any good of themselves. It is his own fault ; people who don't know how to talk should stay at home.'

'I think it served us right,' said Mary Warner. 'I felt it was wrong all the time, only it amused me so.'

'Well ! there is no use in troubling ourselves about it,' said Julia ; 'he is neither father, brother, nor cousin to any of us, and most probably we shall never see him again after to-morrow ; so do let the matter rest.'

Amy thought that the never seeing him again could not make any difference in the action ; but it was not her place to speak. She only felt glad that Mr Cunningham would not consider her unfeeling and forgetful of his kindness, and wondered at Julia's appearing so indifferent to the thought of having given pain, for she continued laughing and talking as before, and trying to make the others do the same. Her efforts, however, were not quite successful ; the circumstance had cast a blank over their enjoyment, and many anxious eyes were turned to the door to see if Mr Cunningham were likely to appear again, and all felt relieved when the conjurer was announced, and the rest of the company came into the room. Mr Cunningham was with them, but their thoughts were now diverted from him, though they all remarked that he took especial notice of Amy, and placed her by his side in the best position for seeing everything.

Amy was grateful for his kindness, but wished it had been differently shown. At first she felt uneasy in her rather elevated situation, and she dreaded very much lest he should begin talking, and especially lest he should refer to what had passed ; but this evening he was peculiarly silent ; and Amy soon forgot everything but the delight of seeing flowers grow out of egg-shells, chickens hatched in a gentleman's hat, rings and brooches found in the possession of every one but their right owners, and all the other wonders which made the conjurer appear to possess some unearthly power. She hardly wished for an explanation of them, and felt quite vexed when she heard Henry Dornford whisper to Frank that some of the tricks were quite nonsense—things he could do himself ; while Mr Cunningham rose in her favour when he told her that great part of the exhibition was beyond his comprehension, and that what Henry had said was merely a school-boy's boast. It seemed now less difficult to believe the marvellous stories of fairies and genii which she had so often read, and she was considering in her own mind whether

Aladdin's lamp might not actually be in existence at that moment, when the green curtain fell, and they were again left to the realities of every-day life. There was an exclamation of regret from all the party, with the exception of Miss Cunningham, who said she was tired of sitting in a dark room. Even little Rose, though she rubbed her eyes, and was almost inclined to cry from mere weariness, begged that the funny man might come back again, or that at least she might have one of the eggs with the pretty flowers in it; and Amy secretly wished the same thing, though she was ashamed to own it when she found every body laughing at Rose and promising her sugar plums and sweetmeats to pacify her.

Miss Cunningham was the first to follow Mrs Harrington to the drawing-room, and to propose that they should begin dancing immediately—a proceeding which excited considerable surprise in Amy's mind, and induced Mr Cunningham to take his sister aside, and beg her to remember that she was not in her own house, and therefore it could not be her place to make suggestions. Dancing did, however, commence almost immediately. Emily Morton was placed at the piano, and no one but Amy appeared to consider that the trouble given required either thanks or apology. It was her business and her duty; and whether agreeable or not, it was a subject of trifling moment. Amy indeed had more leisure to think about it than the rest; for the number of dancers being unequal, she was the only one left out. Dora and Margaret had been first thought of by every one, and Mrs Harrington had taken care of the visitors; but Amy had no claim; she was looked upon as sufficiently at home to be left to herself, and not of consequence enough to be noticed; and the quadrille was formed, and the music had begun, before any one recollected her. Not to dance was rather a relief, but not to be asked was a neglect to which poor Amy was peculiarly alive. The occupations of the last few days had been too varied and interesting to leave much time for her old feelings to return, and she had fancied that they would never trouble her again; but now, as she stood by Miss Morton's side, the only one of the young party who was disengaged, they pressed upon her mind most painfully. Had her mother been in the room, she would have felt it much less; but Mrs Herbert seldom came down when so many persons were present, and Amy in consequence was completely alone. It was the gayest scene she had ever witnessed, and the bright lights and the joyous music alone,

would at another time have given her thorough enjoyment ; but now they were only a source of discontent, for they were looked upon as intended for others and not for her. She watched Dora, and thought how delightful it would be to be like her, the object of general attention, and she listened to the whispered admiration of Margaret's beauty, till she fancied for the moment that to be beautiful must constitute happiness. But Amy's delusion did not last long ; she turned from her cousins to Emily Morton, and the sight of her in some measure recalled better feelings. With beauty, elegance, and goodness, she was as unnoticed as herself. She had no mother, no friends ; her daily life was one of wearying mortification and self-denial ; and yet Emily Morton had never been heard to utter a single murmur. She had never been known to compare her lot with others, or to wonder why she was deprived of the comforts enjoyed by them ; and her heart was a perpetual well-spring of quiet gratitude, which made the heaviest trials of her life sources of improvement to herself, and of blessing to those around her. Even at that moment, her sweet smile and cheerful voice, as she begged to be told whether she was playing to please them, were a lesson which Amy could not but profit by, for she knew that in Emily's place she should have felt very differently ; and she sighed, as the thought crossed her mind how difficult it would be to imitate her. She did, however, make the effort at once, and, when Dora approached, tried to speak gaily and to overcome her vexation ; but a second and a third quadrille were formed, and still she was not asked to dance ; and then the tears rushed to her eyes, and she longed to steal away unobserved, and go to her mamma for the remainder of the evening. Yet she was too shy to venture across the room by herself, and nothing was to be done but to sit quietly in the corner, watching the others, and trying not to be envious of them. Mr Cunningham would willingly have done his utmost to amuse her ; but he was obliged to dance himself to make up the set, and it was not till the termination of the third quadrille that he came to her and began talking. Amy was getting accustomed to his voice, and found his conversation such a relief to her loneliness, that it restored her to a feeling of something like pleasure. She was certain also, from his manner, that he had overheard what had passed in the saloon ; for, although his behaviour to Henry Dornford, and the rest of the party, was exactly the same as usual, yet he was evidently more anxious to please her than he had ever been before, and she felt his kindness peculiarly after

the disappointment she had suffered. She could not, however, quite recover her accustomed cheerfulness even when at length she did join the quadrille; and the enjoyment of the evening was almost lost, especially when she thought how she had looked forward to it, and compared her brilliant expectations with the unlooked-for reality.

CHAPTER XXII.

BUT there was a greater trial awaiting poor Amy's feelings, on that evening, than any she could suffer from neglect. Tired with dancing, she had seated herself in the most retired part of the room, and was half hidden by the window-curtain, when Mrs Danvers and another lady approached, and, without observing who was near, began to remark aloud upon what was going on. At first Amy was amused; she supposed, from their speaking so openly, that they had no wish for privacy, and all they said was of so trifling a nature, and mentioned so good-naturedly, that no pain could have been excited, even if it had been repeated publicly.

The conversation continued for some time, and Amy, feeling weary of her position, was wishing to move, when there was a general press towards the door near which she was standing, and which led into the library, where refreshments had been prepared; and as she stepped aside to make room for others to pass on, it became necessary for her to remain where she was till they were all gone. Mrs Danvers and her friend were nearly in the same situation, and still continued talking, as if perfectly careless whether they were overheard or not.

'Did you see that little girl,' said Mrs Danvers, 'who danced the last quadrille with Frank Harrington?'

'Yes,' was the reply; 'I had not noticed her before all the evening. Who is she?'

'A niece, I believe, of Mr Harrington's,' said Mrs Danvers; 'there is nothing very remarkable about her, only she interests me from circumstances.'

'What circumstances?' inquired her friend.

'Her father is in India,' answered Mrs Danvers, 'and they have had no letters for a long time; and though there has been

some rumour of him lately, and he may be returning home, it is very uncertain ; and Mrs Herbert is in such a dreadful state of anxiety in consequence, that she is extremely ill ; and if anything should happen to her, of course the poor child will live here.'

'She will have a comfortable home, at all events,' observed her companion.

Mrs Danvers looked grave, and replied, 'It will be a very different thing from what it is now. Mrs Harrington is so proud, and her eldest girl so exactly like her, that it will be a state of miserable dependence.'

'But is there no hope for Mrs Herbert?'

'None at all, as far as I can understand. She has been getting worse and worse for the last six months, and, in fact, I believe myself that she is dying.'

Amy heard the last words, and it seemed as if all power of motion or utterance had been taken from her. For months she had felt at times a vague fear that her mother might be worse than she would acknowledge ; but the interest of passing events had quickly dispelled her apprehension, and she had gone on till that hour without allowing herself to imagine that it could be actually possible ; and now, in one moment, the dreadful truth had flashed upon her mind—truth at least it seemed to her, for it had been asserted so confidently, and by persons so much her superiors, that she could not bring herself to doubt it. Her mother's pale face, her uncle's anxious looks, his wish that a physician should be consulted, all returned to her remembrance, and all confirmed Mrs Danvers' words. Her senses nearly forsook her, her head grew giddy, the lights, the people, the music, seemed to have passed away, and the only thing of which she was sensible was a burthen of intolerable misery. Even tears did not come to her relief ; for she was stunned by the suddenness of the shock, and, silent and motionless, she remained unnoticed and unthought of till the company had passed into the library ; and then, with a sudden impulse to escape from the brilliant room and the sound of gaiety, she ran up-stairs towards her mother's chamber. Still, however, she had sufficient self-possession to feel that she might be wrong to venture there suddenly ; and passing the room, she continued her way along the gallery, with but one wish—that of finding some place where she might be undiscovered. The sound of footsteps only quickened her movements, and, almost unconscious of her actions, she opened the first door that presented

itself, and found herself alone in the chapel. The cold light of the moon was shining full into the building, touching with its clear rays the deep moulding of the arches and the rich tracery of the windows, and bringing out into an unnatural distinctness the sculptured figure of the old Baron of Emmerton, whose still features seemed to retain, even in death, the holy, humble spirit which, it was said, had animated them in life. At another time Amy might have felt frightened, but the one overpowering idea in her mind prevented the entrance of every other, and there was a quietness and holiness in the place, which in some degree restored her to herself, for it brought vividly before her the remembrance of Him to whom it had been dedicated, and who at that moment she knew was watching over her. She had, however, but a few moments for reflection, when the door opened, and some one entered the private gallery. Amy tried to hide herself, but Miss Morton's voice in an instant gave her ease and comfort ; and, unable to speak, she threw herself upon her neck, and burst into tears.

'Amy ! my dear, dear Amy !' exclaimed Miss Morton, 'what can be the meaning of this ? Why are you here ?'

Amy only replied by repeating the word 'mamma,' in a tone of such deep misery, that Miss Morton's heart for the moment misgave her.

'What of your mamma ?' she inquired. 'Is she ill ?'

The question only seemed to increase Amy's distress, and Emily became alarmed. 'Will you not try to be calm for my sake ?' she said ; 'you cannot tell how anxious you are making me.'

'Is it true ?' exclaimed Amy, almost gasping for breath ; 'why did you not tell me before ?'

'What should I have told you ?' said Emily, feeling completely bewildered. 'I have known nothing.'

'But mamma,' continued Amy, 'she is so very ill—they say she is, and every one knows it but me ;' and again her sobs became almost hysterical.

'This is some very great mistake, dearest,' said Miss Morton ; 'you will, I am sure, try to calm yourself, and listen to me. Mrs Herbert is not at all worse than usual this evening.'

'Ah ! but Mrs Danvers said it,' replied Amy.

'Said what ?' asked Emily.

'She said,' answered Amy, forcing herself to an unnatural composure, 'that papa, perhaps, would not come home, and that

mamma was so very ill ; and she talked of my living here, and that I should be miserable : but I should die—oh ! I know I should die,' she added, with a vehemence which startled Miss Morton. 'God would not let me live without them : do you think He would ?'

The tone in which this was said was almost too much for Emily's firmness ; for the trial which Amy dreaded, she had herself endured, and she well remembered its bitterness. 'My own dear Amy,' she said, 'you must listen to me now, as you have often done before : you know that I shall speak nothing but the truth to you. Your mamma is ill from anxiety, but there is no reason to apprehend that anything is seriously the matter with her. Dr Bailey has been here this evening.'

'Has he ?' exclaimed Amy. 'Oh ! why did you not tell me ?'

'Because you were engaged at the time,' replied Emily, 'and I had no idea you would be so anxious. He says that there is nothing really amiss yet, that all she requires is rest for the spirits ; and he has quite relieved Mr Harrington's mind.'

'Are you sure ? are you quite sure ?' asked Amy, heaving a deep sigh, as if to free herself from the overwhelming weight which had oppressed her.

'Yes, indeed, I am sure,' replied Emily ; 'of course, it is not for us to speak positively as to what is to happen—it may be the will of God to take her, or to take any one, at any moment ; but according to our human judgment there is nothing to fear.'

'But you cannot be quite certain,' said Amy, whilst the cloud, which had partly passed away, seemed about to return ; 'and Mrs Danvers spoke as if she were.'

'Mrs Danvers can know nothing of the matter,' answered Emily ; 'she has seen very little of your mamma since she has been here ; and you must think of what Dr Bailey says, and try to be happy for the present.'

But Amy could not be happy ; she could not so easily overcome the shock she had received ; and again anxiously asked Emily whether Dr Bailey really said that her mamma would get well.

'He thinks and hopes she will,' replied Emily ; 'but no one can be certain.'

'But if she should not,' said Amy, as she leant her head on Miss Morton's shoulder, and her tears flowed afresh.

'If she should not,' replied Emily, 'would you not try to think of her happiness, even if it were your sorrow ?'

Amy tried to recover herself, but the effort was almost beyond

her. 'I could not live without her,' she said, in a broken voice.

'Yes,' replied Emily, 'you can—we all can learn to submit to whatever is the will of God ; and we can learn to think suffering a blessing, and to thank Him for it even more than for joy ; but you will not understand this now.'

'To live here,' said Amy, following the course of her own thoughts——

'You must not think of it,' replied Emily ; 'God may in mercy grant you many years of happiness in your own home ; but there is no place where He is which may not be your home. Will you endeavour to think of this, dearest ? I know it is true,' she added, in a low voice, 'for I have no home.'

'Oh ! if I could be like you,' exclaimed Amy, earnestly, recalled for the moment from the thought of her own sorrow.

'Do not wish that,' said Emily ; 'but there is One whom we must all learn to be like, and His life was but one continued scene of suffering. We can never have to bear what He bore.'

'I am very wicked,' said Amy, 'but I will try to think as you do, only it is so hard.'

'You need not make yourself unhappy now,' replied Emily, 'by dwelling on a trial which may be far off. I cannot see any great cause for anxiety, only it is well at times to think of sorrow, even in the midst of happiness, that we may be the better prepared to meet it.'

'I thought,' said Amy, 'that I should never be unhappy till I grew old.'

'And so I thought once,' replied Emily. 'But, Amy, before we were either of us conscious of existence, we were both dedicated to the Saviour who died for us, and the sign of His suffering was marked upon our foreheads ; it would be worse than weakness to shrink from following His footsteps, because He calls us to it early.'

'And must I be miserable ?' said Amy.

'No, never,' answered Emily, eagerly ; 'misery is for those who cannot feel that they have a Father in heaven, and therefore it is that when we are too happy, and begin to forget Him, He sends us sorrow to recall us to Himself.'

'Mamma told me something like that once,' said Amy, with a heavy sigh ; 'but I did not think sorrow would come so soon.'

'You must not fancy it is come, dearest,' replied Emily ; 'and you must not think, whatever happens, that you will be miserable.'

In this place, least of all, because everything in a church reminds us that we have God to watch over us, and our Saviour to love us, and holy angels to guard us.'

Amy raised her head, and for a few moments gazed in silence upon the still solemn beauty of the chapel. 'It is better to be here,' she said, at last, 'than in the drawing-room with the lights and the music.'

'You can feel so now,' replied Emily, 'because you are unhappy, and when you have had more trials you will feel so always. When persons have suffered much, and borne their afflictions with patience and thankfulness, they become in a degree calm and composed, as that marble figure beneath us, for their eyes are closed to the sights of the world, and their hearts are raised continually to heaven. Only think how good the saints and martyrs were of whom you have often read; it was trial and suffering which made them so.'

'Oh yes!' replied Amy; 'but who can be like them?'

'We can,' answered Emily, 'if we really wish and try to be. When we were baptized, you know, God gave us His Holy Spirit to enable us to obey Him; and you know also that He will give it to us more and more every day, if we only pray to Him. The greatest saint that ever lived could not have had a higher strength than ours; and therefore, if they bore their afflictions without murmuring, we can do the same.'

Amy was silent, her eyes were fixed upon the marble monument, and she seemed lost in thought. 'May I go to mamma?' she said, at length, in a calmer tone.

'I think,' answered Emily, 'that Mrs Herbert is asleep on the sofa in her bedroom; at least Morris told me so just before I came up-stairs, and perhaps you may disturb her.'

'I must, indeed I must see her!' exclaimed Amy; 'I do not want to speak, only to look at her; and I will try to bear everything,' she added, earnestly, though the tears again filled her eyes as she spoke.

'I wish,' said Emily, 'you could have listened to Dr Bailey's opinion yourself: I only heard it accidentally as I met him in the hall. He seemed to think that if your papa came home soon, Mrs Herbert would get well almost immediately.'

'I do not think he will come now,' said Amy; 'it seems all changed, and my uncle wishes us not to think about it.'

Emily hardly knew what reply to make; she had so many fears upon the subject herself, that she dared not give Amy the

hope which she desired, and could only again beg her to try and trust all things to the will of God, and to feel that He whose child she was, would be her comfort in every affliction.

‘Will they miss me?’ said Amy, as they left the gallery; ‘do you think my aunt will ask where I am gone?’ The question showed that her mind had returned to something like its natural state, and Emily felt considerably relieved.

‘I will take care to make your excuse,’ she said, ‘if any observation is made; but, dearest, you must promise me not to sit by yourself, and dwell upon all the possible evils that may happen. I do not think you will, for your mamma’s sake; it will make her worse to see you unhappy.’

‘I would try for you,’ said Amy, ‘I would do anything—yes, anything in all the world for you.’

‘Anything but believe that your mamma will get well,’ said Emily; ‘and yet that is what I most wish you to do now.’

Amy’s only answer was an entreaty that she then would come to her again as soon as she could, and sadly and noiselessly she stole into her mother’s room.

Mrs Herbert’s sleep was calm as the sleep of a weary child; her breathing was regular and gentle, and her face had lost the painful expression of anxiety which was seldom absent from it at other times. There was a slight tinge of colour upon her pale cheek, and almost a smile upon her lips, and it appeared as if the rest of the mind, which was denied to her waking life, had been mercifully granted to her in her dreams. But Amy, as she stood by her side, did not notice this; she saw only the pale, worn features, and the thin, delicate hand which was resting on the book her mother had been reading, and every moment seemed to force upon her more and more the truth of Mrs Danvers’ words. Yet her self-command did not again leave her; and seating herself on a low stool by the sofa, she continued to watch and listen to every breath with an intense anxiety, which made her insensible to all but the present moment. Still Mrs Herbert slept, and still Amy watched, and by degrees the first overpowering feeling diminished, and her thoughts returned to the past: to her peaceful home, the cottage, which she had once almost despised, with its sloping lawn and its beautiful flowers, and the arbour where her happiest hours had been spent; to the quietness of her morning lessons, and the enjoyment of her afternoon rambles; and, above all, to the unwearying care which had guarded her from every evil, and ministered to her hourly

gratification ; and as she remembered these things, and then gazed upon her mother's face, it seemed as if every feeling of affection which she had hitherto experienced had been but cold and ungrateful—as if now, for the first time, she had known what it was really to love her. Of Emmerton, too, she thought, and of her aunt, and Dora, and Margaret, and the possibility that their home might be hers for the future ; and while pondering upon the idea, the very comfort of the room in which she was sitting, with its rich crimson curtains and thick carpet, and luxurious chairs, and the soft, mellow light of the lamp burning on the table—all became oppressive. They had made her envious and discontented when she was happy, and now they could give her no comfort when she was sorrowful. What would all the riches of the world be to her without her mother ? On the possibility of her father's return she could at first dwell but little ; for it was difficult to believe it very near, and if it were delayed it might be too late to be of use, and a meeting under such circumstances would be almost worse than a continued separation. But Amy's spirit was too buoyant in its nature to remain long depressed by such forebodings ; there was a brighter side to the picture, and Miss Morton had entreated her to think of it. Colonel Herbert might be on his voyage home, he might even be in England at that very time, and then every one said her mamma would recover. For one moment she believed that it might be so, and her heart bounded with delight, though immediately afterwards it sunk again into doubt and suspense ; and at length, worn out with anxiety, she laid her head against her mother's pillow, and slept also. The distant sound of the music, and the hum of voices below, mingled strangely with her sad thoughts, and her rest was far different from her mother's. Visions of India, such as it had often been described to her, of her father in health and happiness, and her mamma on her sick bed, and of the cottage, and Emmerton, and her cousins, were blended together in her dreams, now bringing before her scenes of sorrow and trial, and then changing them suddenly into happiness. Sorrow indeed prevailed ; yet the hope which had cheered her before she slept was associated with it, and even when her wandering fancy pictured most vividly some painful trial, her father's image was at hand, to comfort and support her. Half an hour passed away, and Amy's slumber still continued restless but unbroken, whilst in her dream she was walking with her father on the terrace at Emmerton, describing to

him her mother's illness, and begging him to go back with her to the cottage, when a strange, unusual sound fell upon her ear ; and as she turned to inquire from him the cause, she awoke. The sound was apparently so real, that even when her recollection was completely recovered, Amy could not entirely believe it was only a dream, and she listened eagerly to discover what was passing below. The music had ceased, but there did not seem to be any preparations for departure, or the carriages would have been heard as they drove up to the house ; and yet there were distant sounds of bustle, doors were opened and shut hastily, and voices were earnest in conversation, while servants were moving quickly along the gallery. Amy thought and wondered, and, without understanding her own ideas, grew excited and anxious. She longed for her mother to wake, that she might listen also ; and at length, unable to remain quietly in her room, she walked softly into the ante-room. It looked out upon the front entrance, and the bright moonlight made everything appear almost as clear as day. Still unable to comprehend what was going on, she went to the window ; there was a carriage at the door, and she wondered that she had not heard it approach, but still no one was departing, and bags and luggage were being removed from it. Amy looked on for a few moments, and then a thought of unspeakable happiness passed across her mind, a thought so overpowering that it was gone in the next instant. She felt that it was only fancy ; but it made her run to the door and again listen with breathless earnestness. Footsteps were heard upon the stairs ; she knew them well—they were her uncle's, and her spirit sickened with disappointment ; they came nearer—and then she felt sure some one else was with him. It might be Dr Bailey returned again, or Mr Dornford, or any one, yet Amy's heart beat till she could scarcely stand. More slowly (so it appeared to her) than he had ever moved before, Mr Harrington passed along the gallery, and she was just going to meet him when he entered the room alone. Amy turned deadly pale, and did not speak ; but when she looked in her uncle's face, her vanished hope revived. He asked, indeed, only how her mother was ; but his voice was quick and unnatural ; there was a bright, restless glance in his eye, and a strange smile upon his lips.

‘Mamma is asleep,’ said Amy ; ‘she has been asleep very long, and I slept a little ; but such a strange sound awakened me.’

‘Nonsense, child,’ said Mr Harrington ; ‘are you sure it was not in your dreams ? What did you hear ?’

‘I don’t know,’ replied Amy ; ‘only it was so strange, and there is no music now, and there is a carriage at the door.’

‘Why, you foolish child,’ said Mr Harrington, ‘you are dreaming still. It is time for every one to go.’

‘Is there really nothing ?’ inquired Amy ; and her very existence seemed to depend upon the answer she received.

‘What should there be ?’ said Mr Harrington. ‘Do you think your mamma could see Dr Bailey again ?’

‘Again !’ repeated Amy : ‘oh ! then, she must be very ill.’

‘No, no,’ exclaimed Mr Harrington, ‘not ill ; only he might as well see her.’

‘But is he here ?’ asked Amy.

Mr Harrington did not answer ; but he left the room, and immediately returned, followed by another gentleman. Amy looked at him as he entered, and for the first moment believed that he was a perfect stranger ; but, as he stood quietly in the door-way, with the light of the lamp falling full on his face, she became conscious that every feature was familiar to her. Again she looked, and then she doubted ; she seemed to know well the high forehead, the dark eye, and the grave mouth ; but the sallow complexion, the deep wrinkles, and the look of age, completely bewildered her.

‘Amy,’ said Mr Harrington, ‘why do you not speak ?’

Amy’s voice was almost choked as she endeavoured to reply. ‘O uncle !’ she exclaimed—‘if I could but tell——,’ and she burst into tears.

‘This must not be,’ said the deep, rich voice of the stranger. ‘Harrington, it is wrong to trifle with her. Amy, my own precious child !’—and the next moment Amy was clasped in her father’s arms.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN her after-life Amy enjoyed many and great blessings ; but she could never recur to any which equalled the pure, intense pleasure of that moment. Colonel Herbert’s return seemed the restoration of both her parents ; and even before she had again looked in her father’s face, and wondered at the strangeness of

his sudden arrival, she had thought of the unspeakable relief her mother would experience, and involuntarily rushed to the door of her chamber. She was stopped, however, by Mr Harrington.

‘We must be careful,’ he said ; ‘your mamma is too weak to bear such a surprise. I will break it to her gently.’

‘Mamma is moving,’ said Amy ; ‘she will hear us. May I not go?’

Mrs Herbert had caught the sound of voices, and asked if Amy were there.

‘There is nothing to be done, then,’ said Mr Harrington, in answer to Amy’s imploring look ; ‘but remember you must be cautious.’

Colonel Herbert came forward and stationed himself near the door. ‘I cannot bear this long,’ he whispered. ‘Amy, my darling child, I must go to her soon,’ and Amy, unable to restrain her own eagerness, answered her mother’s summons.

‘Who is in the ante-room?’ said Mrs Herbert. ‘You were speaking to some one.’

‘My uncle was there,’ answered Amy ; ‘he did not know at first that you were asleep.’

‘Is it late?’ asked Mrs Herbert. ‘You look so flushed, my love ; have you been dancing much?’

‘No, not much, mamma ; there were so many ; and I sat still a great while, and then I came up to you.’

‘I must have slept very long,’ said Mrs Herbert ; ‘and I would willingly sleep for ever, if my dreams could be as happy ; but I will not murmur ; it is an infinite blessing to have an hour’s rest to the mind, even if it be unreal.’

‘It may be real soon, mamma,’ said Amy, and her voice trembled as she spoke.

Mrs Herbert looked at her anxiously. ‘You are worn out with excitement and fatigue, my dear ; that flush on your cheek is very unnatural.’

‘I don’t feel tired at all, mamma,’ replied Amy ; ‘but my face is rather burning, I think.’

‘There is something the matter, I am sure,’ said her mother ; ‘you never looked so before. Are you sure you have not been vexed at anything?’

‘Vexed ! oh no ! mamma, anything but that.’

‘You must go to bed soon,’ said Mrs Herbert, ‘or you will certainly be ill to-morrow.’

‘I had rather not go to bed,’ replied Amy; ‘I could not sleep if I did.’

‘Not sleep!’ repeated Mrs Herbert; ‘then you must be ill, my dear child, or,’ she added, after again gazing upon Amy intently, ‘there must be something very unusual to prevent it.’

Amy did not reply, her lip quivered, and her self-command almost forsook her.

‘There is something,’ said Mrs Herbert, starting up, ‘I am sure there is. Oh! tell me quickly, is it sorrow!’

‘No, no, mamma,’ exclaimed Amy, as she knelt at her mother’s side, and hid her face in her lap, ‘it is not sorrow,—it is great, great joy; but my uncle says you will not be able to bear it.’

‘Is he come?’ asked Mrs Herbert, in a low, half audible voice.

There was no time to answer. Colonel Herbert had heard the question, and entered the room. For an instant Mrs Herbert fixed her eyes wildly upon him, doubting the reality of his appearance; and then, as the truth forced itself upon her mind, she tried to rise from the sofa, and, unequal to the effort, fell back and fainted. With returning consciousness came an indistinct sense of great happiness, but it was some time before she could entirely realise what had happened. She asked no questions—she did not even seem surprised at her husband’s unexpected arrival; but sat with his hand in her own looking at him earnestly, as if still fearful that it was but a vision which she saw, and that it would quickly vanish away.

Colonel Herbert’s feelings were not quite of so unmixed a nature. Mr Harrington had prepared him in some degree for the change which illness and anxiety had made in his wife’s appearance; but he had not pictured it to himself as great as it really was. He had imagined that he should yet see the fair, clear complexion, and the bright glow of health which he had so much delighted in when they parted; and now, when his eye rested upon her wasted features, the sad foreboding crossed his mind, that they had met only to endure a more terrible separation. It was not a time, however, for the indulgence of sorrowful thoughts. Mrs Herbert gradually recovered from the stunning effect of an overpowering joy, and was able to inquire into the cause of his strange silence, and his sudden return.

The story, when told, was very simple. Colonel Herbert had gone on an expedition into a distant province, as he had stated in the last letter that had been received from him. The servant who had accompanied him he had trusted entirely, and had confided

to him several packets intended to be forwarded to England. After the lapse of a considerable time, complaints of his silence reached him from several quarters ; and he then first discovered the man's negligence, and wrote again to his wife, hoping that his letter had been secured from all risks, though the unsettled condition of the country through which he was travelling rendered it very doubtful. Before an answer could be received, he was seized with a dangerous illness, and left entirely to the care of the uncivilised natives, in a state of pain and weakness which prevented him from making any exertions for himself ; and, on his recovery, hearing of the breaking out of the war, as Mrs Herbert had expected, he hastened to join his regiment ; but the insurrection, for it was scarcely more, having been quelled before his arrival, he made arrangements for an immediate return to England, feeling much distressed when he discovered, from Mrs Herbert's letters, the dreadful anxiety she had undergone, and the alteration it had effected in her general health.

'You would have heard from me before I reached Emmerton,' concluded Colonel Herbert, 'if this place were not so much out of the regular posting line ; but I knew I should be with you before a letter could be forwarded.'

'You went first to the cottage, of course,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'it must have worn a desolate face, with none to greet you.'

'I inquired for you first in the village,' he replied, 'and learned there that you were spending your Christmas at the Hall ; but they gave me a sad account of you, my love, and I hardly know that it is worse than the reality.'

'Worse !' repeated Mrs Herbert, with a smile which made Amy's heart bound in ecstasy ; 'it would seem worse than the reality now, to say that even my finger ached. Years of health seem to have been granted me in the last hour.'

'So you say to-night,' replied her husband ; 'but you must look very different before I shall be quite happy.'

'We must not doubt,' said Mrs Herbert, gravely, 'though I am the last person to find fault with another on that account : I have had dreadful forebodings lately ; and Amy, I suspect, can tell you of some also, for my fears were beginning to infect her.'

Colonel Herbert drew his child fondly towards him. 'She shall tell me everything to-morrow,' he said ; 'to-night she is ever tired.'

Amy wished to speak ; but her first delight had been succeeded by something of shyness and restraint ; for her father was in

many respects so different from what she had anticipated, that a feeling of awe was partly mingled with the intense interest excited by every word he uttered. Amy had seen but few gentlemen in her lifetime, and Colonel Herbert was unlike them all. She had been accustomed to his picture, until the alterations occasioned by years and a foreign climate were quite forgotten ; and the many tales she had heard of his kindness and benevolence had made her unprepared for the firmness and decision evinced in all he said. Even the tone of his voice so little resembled any to which she had been in the habit of listening, that it prevented her from being at ease with him, although this very difference served to increase her pleasure ; for to be loved and caressed by one whose every word showed that he had been used only to command and be obeyed, was a happiness she had before been incapable of imagining. To sit by his side, and look at and hearken to him, was all that she now desired ; and whatever fatigue her countenance might express, she was herself too much absorbed to think about it ; and it was not till some time had passed, and she found herself alone, after having received her father's blessing (it seemed to her for the first time), that she began to feel the effects of the excitement undergone in the space of a few hours. Wearied and exhausted, she seated herself by the fire, and, unwilling to wait for the assistance of her mother's maid, was endeavouring to summon resolution to exert herself, when a gentle tap was heard at the door, and immediately afterwards Dora entered.

'I could not go to bed, Amy,' she said, 'without coming to you for one minute. I wish I could tell you, but you know I can't say things, only I am sure no one in the house can be as glad as I am, except yourselves.'

'Dear Dora,' exclaimed Amy, 'I thought of you when I began to think of anything ; and there is so much I should like to say to you ; but I must wait till to-morrow, for I am so tired with being happy.'

'That was another reason for my coming,' replied Dora ; 'I knew you would want some one to help you, and that my aunt's maid would be engaged with her, and perhaps you would not like to ring for Morris ; so I thought perhaps you would let me be with you instead.'

'Oh no,' replied Amy ; 'it was very kind in you to remember me, but you cannot be any better than I am ; you have been dancing all the evening.'

‘But I have set my heart upon it ; you would not refuse if you could tell the pleasure it would be ; I don’t mean to talk at all, but just to do everything for you. Perhaps, though, you would rather I came again presently.’

Amy hesitated, but Dora insisted on having her own way ; and only left her on condition of being allowed to return in a quarter of an hour. When her cousin was gone, Amy tried to collect her thoughts, and oblige herself to attend to her evening prayers ; but at first it seemed impossible. She longed to be grateful, but fatigue overpowered every feeling ; and when, closing her eyes, and hiding her face in her hands, she endeavoured to shut out everything that might divert her attention, the vivid remembrance of all that had passed flashed upon her mind, and effectually distracted her thoughts. Again and again she repeated the form of words, but it was merely a form ; she could attach no meaning to it ; and once she was tempted to yield entirely, and content herself with the notion that it was better not to pray at all, than to do so when it appeared only a mockery. The next instant, however, she was shocked at her own idea, and, after asking for forgiveness and assistance, at length in some measure succeeded in fixing her attention. The effort was great, and Amy’s conscience reproached her when she had ended for the manner in which this most solemn of all duties had been performed ; but her endeavours had been sincere, and she knew well that even her imperfect prayers would be accepted, when they were offered in the name of her Saviour. She was now also better able to feel grateful to God for His great mercies ; for the name of her father had never sounded so precious as when she had asked for God’s blessing upon him, and had been able to bring his countenance before her, such as she had that evening seen it. Dora’s knock was heard at the door before Amy had time to read her accustomed psalm ; and, on her entrance, she was looking so tired, that Amy was vexed at having allowed her to return. She declared, however, that it was only her cousin’s fancy, and immediately began assisting her with as much energy as if she had borne no previous exertion. Amy was not very much inclined for conversation ; but she was anxious to learn a few particulars of her father’s arrival, and especially, whether the sound in her dream had been real or imaginary. ‘It was so startling,’ she said, ‘I should like to be quite certain that it was real.’

‘It must have been just when your papa came to the door,’

replied Dora. 'We heard the carriage drive up, and thought it was one that had been just ordered, so no one took any notice. I remember I was talking to Mary Warner, and trying to pacify her, for she has offended Miss Cunningham; and suddenly there was a great exclamation; and when I turned round, my uncle was standing in the door-way, and papa was looking so happy. I knew in an instant who it must be. There was something said about my aunt, and that she would hear; and then every one inquired for you, and you could not be found, and Emily Morton said you were with her.'

'Then you did not miss me,' observed Amy, rather in a tone of disappointment.

'I did,' replied Dora; 'but Emily told me you were unhappy about my aunt.'

'Yes,' said Amy, shrinking from the remembrance of what she had suffered, 'I hope I shall never feel again as I did then.'

'Do not think about it now,' said Dora, kindly: 'let me draw the curtains, and make you quite comfortable, and then you shall go to sleep.'

'Would you do me one more favour?' asked Amy. 'Mamma always likes me to read something in the Bible at night, only a short psalm, or a few verses that she has chosen for me; but my eyes are so dizzy now, I can hardly see.'

'And you would like me to read to you?' continued Dora, taking the Bible from the table.

'Just tell me about Miss Cunningham before you begin,' said Amy; 'but no,' she added, stopping herself, 'I will hear it to-morrow. It will be better than thinking about it just now.'

'Oh! it is nothing at all,' replied Dora. 'Lucy would play as usual, and broke down, and when we were talking afterwards, Mary asked her if she had not some notion of having lessons of Emily Morton, and said what an advantage it would be, and this put her into a great rage, because she declared it was laughing and sneering at her—not that it was at all, for Mary Warner is the last person to sneer, and was quite vexed at having given offence; but, Amy, why did you say it would be better to hear it to-morrow?'

'Because you were just going to read the Bible,' replied Amy, 'and I thought it might put things into my head, and prevent me from attending.'

'But you could have heard it afterwards.'

'No,' answered Amy, 'I generally read the last thing, and

then mamma tells me to try and not attend to common things ; she says our last thoughts should be of God.'

'We should think of Him always,' said Dora.

'Yes,' replied Amy ; 'but you know, Dora, sleep is like death, and perhaps we may never wake again.'

'That never entered my head before,' said Dora, gravely. 'I shall not go to sleep so comfortably now as I used to do.'

'Why not ?' asked Amy.

'It is so awful. I should not care if I were you, Amy, and had never done anything wrong ; but I could not bear to die now.'

'O Dora !' exclaimed Amy, 'you know no one could bear to die, if they thought only of what they had done wrong, and I am sure the idea would make me miserable if I did not say my prayers every night ; but when I have done that, and remember what mamma has shown me in the Bible about our Saviour, and that God will love us for His sake, though we are so wicked, I am quite comfortable ; and sometimes, after I have read my psalm, I can go off to sleep so happily, with the thought that angels are watching all round my bed.'

'Yes,' said Dora, earnestly ; 'if angels watch over any one, they must over you, Amy.'

'The Bible says they are sent to take care of us all,' replied Amy.

'I should like to think so,' said Dora ; 'but it is so strange.'

'It must be true,' answered Amy ; 'if it is in the Bible, and I like to think of them so much. It seems as if one could never be alone ; and sometimes I fancy that they are quite near, amongst the trees and flowers. Will you read the psalm to-night which says "that God will give His angels charge over us ?" I don't quite know which it is, but I think I could find it.'

Dora read the psalm, but she did not make any more observations ; and having thought of every little trifle that could contribute to Amy's comfort, she gave her one kiss of the truest affection, and left her to the enjoyment of a calm and innocent repose. Her own thoughts, when she retired to rest, were far from being happy : indeed, she seldom now had any conversation with her cousin, without its being succeeded by a deep consciousness of her own inferiority in those principles which she was just beginning to consider of the utmost importance ; and to this was now added a feeling of great loneliness. Colonel Herbert's return would most probably cause a considerable

change in Amy's life. She would be far less dependent upon Emmerton than formerly, and Dora found that her cousin was gradually becoming so necessary to her comfort, that the idea of any arrangement which might prevent her from being with them constantly was excessively painful. Yet they might be separated at any moment. Colonel Herbert might leave the cottage: he might choose that Amy should travel, and then all sympathy and consolation would be taken away; and while dwelling sadly upon these probabilities, the image of Emily Morton came before her, and with it the feeling that once she might have been her friend, but that no present attention could atone for the neglect and scorn that had so long been shown her. Dora saw that she had injured her as far as lay in her power, by destroying her comfort for months, and it was vain to hope that now she would be willing to forget it. Amy would have thought differently; but she understood better than Dora what is meant by forgiving our brother 'until seventy times seven,' and she knew also that there was no Christian virtue, however difficult, which Emily Morton did not endeavour to attain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE sun was shining brightly into Amy's room when she awoke the next morning—so brightly, that she started up in alarm at what she knew must be the lateness of the hour; but the next moment brought the thought of her father to her mind, and with it a feeling of entire happiness and peace. Her mother's gentleness seemed frequently overpowered by her aunt's sternness, but no one would dare to find fault with her in Colonel Herbert's presence; and for the first time Amy felt sure that she could be perfectly at her ease even if Mrs Harrington were there. Yet, on remembering what had passed, and recalling her father's grave, calm features, she was not entirely free from fear. His height, his voice, his age, his manner, placed him in her imagination at an immeasurable distance from her; she could not believe it possible that he should be satisfied with her; he must expect to see some one taller, and cleverer, and more accomplished: if she could but sing and play like Miss Morton, and speak French and Italian like Dora, she should not care; but as it was, she was

convinced he must be disappointed ; and as these thoughts crossed her mind, Amy stopped in the middle of her toilette, and began repeating French phrases, and reckoning how many drawings she had to show, and playing over the most difficult passages in her music with her fingers on the table. A knock at the door interrupted her. It was Emily Morton, looking so happy, that Amy fancied for the instant she must have some personal cause for joy. But it had been long since Emily had known what it was to be light-hearted for herself. Peaceful and contented she could always be ; but when her countenance was the most brightened by smiles, and her voice sounded the most cheerfully, the happiness of others rather than her own was invariably the cause. She had learned to ‘weep with those that weep,’ and now she was learning to ‘rejoice with those that rejoiced.’

‘You would have looked more frightened yesterday, Amy,’ she said, ‘if I had told you breakfast was ready, and every one wondering at your absence.’

‘Ah, yes,’ replied Amy ; ‘but I cannot feel frightened at anything this morning, excepting—I am afraid perhaps you will think it wrong—but do you think papa will be pleased with me ? I don’t mean exactly with my face, and my manner, because he will not care so much about that, as I am his child ; but will he think me very stupid, and dull, and different from everybody else ?’

‘If he should feel as I do,’ said Emily, as she fastened Amy’s dress, and smoothed her dark ringlets, ‘he will love you so dearly, that he will not be inclined to criticise anything ; but we must not wait to talk now—breakfast is really ready, and your uncle asked me to come for you.’

‘My uncle !’ said Amy ; ‘but shall we not be in the school-room as usual ?’

‘No,’ replied Emily ; ‘every one was so late this morning, that Mrs Harrington thought it better not.’

‘And will all the company be in the breakfast-room, then ?’ said Amy, in great alarm ; ‘and am I the last ?’

‘Not quite,’ replied Emily ; ‘Mrs Danvers is not come down yet ; and there is a special place left for you at the bottom of the table, between your papa and your uncle.’

‘I do not think I can go,’ said Amy, stopping as she was about to leave the room ; ‘there will be so many—and it will be just like seeing papa quite new—I can hardly recollect now what he was like last night.’

‘But he asked so often if your cousins had seen you, and was so anxious about you,’ replied Emily, ‘he could scarcely attend to anything else ; and your mamma was obliged to beg him not to have you disturbed, or I am sure he would have sent for you half an hour ago.’

‘If I thought he would not be disappointed, I should not care,’ said Amy, as she moved slowly along the gallery ; ‘but I know all my ideas will go when he speaks to me, and then he will think me so dull, and be so vexed.’

‘Will you, dearest, try and not think of yourself at all?’ replied Emily. ‘It is distrusting your papa’s affection to have such fancies, and it will do you harm in every way.’

‘I would if I could,’ answered Amy ; ‘but I must wish to please him.’

‘I do not say there is any harm in it,’ replied Emily, ‘only it will make you awkward and uncomfortable if you dwell upon it ; whatever you feel, however, it will last but a short time ; you will be quite at home with him in a few days.’

Amy was very much inclined to pause when they reached the breakfast-room, and continued talking, but Emily hastily opened the door, and she was obliged to enter. The room was quite full, and she did not at first see either her mamma or her cousins ; even the persons she knew the best seemed quite strangers to her ; but Emily led her to the bottom of the room, and Colonel Herbert came eagerly towards her ; and as she seated herself in the vacant chair by his side, looked at her with an expression of such deep, heartfelt satisfaction and love, that she would have been quite satisfied and happy, if bashfulness and humility had not prevented her from understanding its meaning. At first, she was very silent, feeling rather bewildered by the sound of so many voices, and the attention which every one was inclined to bestow upon her, for her father’s sudden return had excited a general interest ; but by degrees she summoned courage to make a few voluntary observations ; and the eagerness with which he answered her so increased her confidence, that before breakfast was ended, she had given him a full description of her life at the cottage, and her studies and amusements. Colonel Herbert listened with unwearied pleasure. In many a solitary hour he had solaced himself by imagining what his child would be like, and now his fondest expectations were realised. By the side of her cousin Margaret, indeed, Amy might have been little regarded, at least by those who cared only for personal beauty ;

but to this Colonel Herbert was indifferent. One glance was sufficient to show that Amy was a lady in every word and movement, and with this he was satisfied; and even had her eyes sparkled less brightly, and her countenance been less interesting, he would not have been disappointed; for in the expression of every feature, as well as in every sentiment and feeling, he could read the gentleness, meekness, and purity of the spirit within. Once only Amy paused in her account, when her attention was caught by a sound which she had not heard before for many months; it was her mother's laugh—so clear, and sweet, and joyous, that it might almost have been the echo of her own; and when she turned eagerly to look at her, and saw the change that even one night had produced, the last remaining shadow which rested on her mind passed away, and she felt that Dr Bailey's words must be true, and that now there was little cause for fear.

'You will wish to go to the cottage, I suppose, by and by,' said Mrs Herbert, before they left the breakfast table, 'and Amy can go with you.'

'There will be the carriage at your disposal,' said Mr Harrington, 'if you are not afraid to venture out.'

Mrs Herbert was very much inclined to take advantage of the offer, but her husband interfered.

'I have a disappointment in store for you both,' he said, 'not a very great one, though—so, my darling Amy, you need not look so blank; but I must ride into the town to-day. I have a message from a very great friend of mine, to his mother and sisters, and I promised, if possible, to deliver it personally on my arrival in England; you will not ask me to delay it, I am sure.'

'Oh no, no!' exclaimed Mrs Herbert, recollecting her own feelings a short time since, and the relief any intelligence would have afforded her; 'but you will pass the cottage—cannot you contrive to take us with you so far?'

'Not you,' replied Colonel Herbert; 'it would be too great a risk in this weather; for if we were once there together, we should spend hours in wandering about and talking over old times, and I have learned Dr Bailey's opinion by heart—he says there must be no excitement, and no exposure to cold.'

Mrs Herbert again urged her wishes, but her husband was inexorable. He prized too dearly his newly-recovered treasure, he said, to allow any risk to be run, but he should like, if possible, for Amy to be with him.

'I could walk, indeed, I could walk quite well, dear papa,' said Amy; 'I have done it before; and it would seem such a short distance with you.'

'There will be no occasion for anything of the kind,' said Mr Harrington; 'you can easily go with your papa in the carriage, Amy, as far as the cottage, and one of the grooms shall take a horse to meet him there, and then he can go on to the town, and you can return here.'

Amy thought the plan delightful, though she wished her mamma could go too, but Colonel Herbert again expressed his fears; and it was agreed that this day at least should be given to perfect rest and quietness. The carriage was ordered almost immediately, and Amy ran up-stairs to prepare, but on her way she was stopped by Mary Warner.

'I am so sorry you are going out this morning, for my own sake,' she said, 'as we shall be gone probably before you return, and I have seen nothing of you; and besides, I wished very much, if I could, to talk to you about Miss Cunningham. Your cousin tells me that you know how angry I made her last night.'

'Yes,' replied Amy, 'I wish I could help you, but I am afraid it is impossible, and papa will be waiting; can you not come to my room whilst I am dressing?'

'If I may,' said Mary, 'I should be very glad, for I am not at all happy about it.'

'But, indeed,' answered Amy, 'you must not think I can do anything; you know I am so much younger than Miss Cunningham, and she will never bear my interfering in any way.'

'I do not wish you to interfere,' said Mary, 'only to tell me whether you think I was very wrong, and if I ought to make any more apologies.'

Amy led the way to her room, and endeavoured to give Mary her full attention, though her thoughts would frequently wander to the cottage, and the drive with her papa, notwithstanding all her efforts to prevent it.

'You know the beginning of the affair, I suppose,' said Mary. 'It was merely an observation of mine about the advantage it would be to Miss Cunningham to have music lessons. I know it was foolish in me to say it, because it was just after she had broken down in a piece she was playing; but I am in the habit of saying just what I think, so I often get into scrapes. I cannot tell why she should have been so angry, though; but she declared every one was trying to be impertinent to her, and that it was

not my place to say what would be an advantage to her, that I was but a school-girl, and could not possibly know anything about it; and then she went on muttering something to herself about London, and that all the world would be mistaken; but I could not in the least understand what she meant.'

'And did you say you were sorry?' asked Amy.

'Yes; I begged her pardon immediately, but that did not satisfy her, and I saw she wished me to retract, or at least to say something in her praise; but that I could not do—I could not tell her anything that was not true, for the world.'

'No, of course not,' said Amy; 'but how can I help you?'

'I don't know,' replied Mary, 'unless you could make Miss Cunningham less angry; she will scarcely speak to me now, and your cousin Margaret has taken her part; and Hester Stanley declares I was very rude, and has been quite lecturing me this morning, and Julia only laughs, and your cousin Dora says it does not signify.'

'I cannot think there is anything to be done,' said Amy, 'and I wish you would ask some one who knows more about such things than I do.'

'I have talked to them all, excepting you,' replied Mary, 'and I did not come to you for advice exactly, because I do not really think it can be helped; but I am very unhappy, and wanted some one to talk to. I wonder if it was very wrong in me to say what I did: I did not mean any harm; but I always think it right to speak what is strictly the truth. Should you have done the same if you had been in my place?'

'I daresay I should,' replied Amy; 'but mamma tells me I ought to be very careful always, and not to make hasty remarks, because I may vex people very much without meaning it.'

'That is what I do sometimes, I am afraid,' said Mary; 'and yet I only mean to be sincere.'

'Miss Morton is sincere,' replied Amy, thoughtfully; 'but I do not think any one could be vexed with her. I should like to be able to say straightforward things as she does.'

'Miss Morton is so gentle,' said Mary; 'and once or twice I have noticed her manner when she has differed from any one, and it appeared as if she were so afraid of annoying them, I do not think any one could take offence at her.'

'Perhaps,' said Amy, hesitatingly, 'it is what every one ought to be, and then——'

'I know what you mean,' exclaimed Mary. 'I know I am

abrupt. Mamma is often telling me of it, and I daresay I was wrong last night ; but what is to be done now ?’

‘There is papa calling me,’ said Amy, ‘I wish I could stay ; but indeed I must not keep him waiting.’

Mary looked heartily vexed. ‘I do not think I shall go downstairs again,’ she said. ‘We are to set off very soon, and I cannot meet Miss Cunningham.’

‘But she will not think about such a trifle still,’ said Amy.

‘Yes, indeed, she will,’ replied Mary ; ‘I cannot tell you how she looked this morning at breakfast. I am sure that piece of music must be a tender subject with her.’

Colonel Herbert’s voice was again heard calling for Amy, and she had no time to attempt comforting poor Mary.

‘I must not wait a moment,’ she said, as she wished her ‘good-bye,’ ‘but I daresay I shall see you at Emmerton again, some day or other ; and then, if Miss Cunningham is not here, we shall be able to enjoy ourselves a great deal more.’

Mary could hardly say with truth that she ever wished to come to Emmerton again, she was feeling so annoyed with herself, and almost every one about her ; but she could and did express a most sincere hope of meeting Amy at some future time, and they parted with mutual feelings of kindness and interest. As they passed through the hall, Miss Cunningham was at the drawing-room door. She did not notice Amy, though she had not spoken to her before that morning, but her contracted brow and curling lip portended no common storm. Amy was too happy to think of her ; she was standing by her father’s side listening to his parting words to Mrs Herbert, and caring only for the pleasure before her ; and when he stopped to give the necessary directions to the coachman, she was still too much occupied to observe the tone in which Miss Cunningham inquired, ‘whether any one had seen Margaret lately, as she must speak to her directly.’

The carriage drove off, and the footman at the door was despatched in search of Margaret, who soon made her appearance, with a face of eager curiosity, which was quickly clouded when she saw the expression of her friend’s countenance.

‘What do you want with me ?’ she asked ; ‘I was very busy in the schoolroom ; I hope it is something of consequence.’

‘Of course it is,’ was the reply, ‘or I should not have sent for you. But it will not do to talk about it here ; you must come to my room.’

‘Tell me whom it concerns,’ said Margaret. ‘Is it anything about London?’

But Miss Cunningham either did not hear or would not answer. She led the way to her own apartment, and carefully bolting the door, exclaimed, with a scornful laugh, ‘Well, Margaret, I wish you joy; it is all settled, and you are going.’

‘Going! settled!’—repeated Margaret; ‘it cannot be true; no, I am sure it is not; you would not look in that way, if it were.’

‘Yes, but I should, though,’ exclaimed Lucy, ‘for it is quite true you are going; but you will not have me to go with you; that is all I wished to say.’

‘Pray, pray, Lucy,’ said Margaret, ‘do not tease me in this way. How do you know it is settled?’

‘Because,’ replied Miss Cunningham, rising from the seat on which she had thrown herself, and walking quickly about the room, ‘because papa, and Mr Harrington, and Colonel Herbert have been talking of it. Papa said he must make one more effort before we went home, and he mentioned the subject directly after breakfast; and when Colonel Herbert heard it, he said he should be obliged to be in London about Easter; and then Mr Harrington turned completely round, and declared his being there would make all the difference in the world, and that he should certainly consent, and so they said it was settled; but they did not ask me,’ she continued, more vehemently, ‘and they shall find that I can have a will as well as themselves. I will never, no, never consent to be treated again as I have been treated here. To be taught by that Miss Morton—I would rather stay at home all the days of my life; and those school-girls too—actually Miss Julia Stanley had the impertinence to say, just now, that she should be glad to hear me play after I had had lessons, and see if I were improved; not that there is any chance of our meeting. London is a very different place from the country; and that she will soon know.’

‘Oh!’ said Margaret, soothingly, ‘she will never come in your way there.’

‘But Miss Morton, that Miss Morton,’ exclaimed Lucy. ‘I am quite in earnest, Margaret; you may talk for ever, you may go down upon your knees to me, and I will never agree to go if she does.’

‘Dear Lucy,’ said Margaret, covering her with kisses, and speaking in her most persuasive voice, ‘you know how much I

love you, and how miserable I shall be without you ; you are only saying this in joke, I am sure.'

'You may be sure of anything you like, it does not signify to me ; nothing can make me change.'

'But you will not care when those girls are gone away,' said Margaret ; 'you are merely vexed because they are so rude.'

'Vexed !' repeated Miss Cunningham ; 'when did I say I was vexed ? who cares for school-girls ? how can they know good music from bad ?'

'No, to be sure not,' said Margaret ; 'and Julia Stanley cannot tell a note.'

'I never knew that,' exclaimed Lucy, rather pacified. 'How foolish she would have looked, if I had asked her to sit down and play it better.'

'I wish you had done it, with all my heart,' said Margaret ; 'but it is not too late now : they are here still,—let us go into the schoolroom and say something. I should enjoy making her ashamed of herself, and we shall not have another opportunity ; for, as you observe, there is no chance of meeting her in London.'

Margaret waited anxiously to hear what effect her words would have, and to remark whether the mention of London would bring back the thought of Emily Morton. But Miss Cunningham had now seized upon this new idea, and forgot that her indignation had been excited by any one but Julia. 'Are they all there ?' she said ; 'half the pleasure would be gone, if there was no one by.'

'They were all there when I came to you,' replied Margaret ; 'but we must make haste, for Dora was wishing to take them round to the farther side of the lake this morning, because it is the only part of the grounds they have not seen.'

Miss Cunningham hardly waited to hear the end of the sentence ; she hastened down-stairs, and to her great delight found the whole party lingering round the fire in the schoolroom, wishing to go out, yet unwilling to brave the cold. If Margaret had been rather quicker in perception, and not quite so anxious, she might have been amused at this moment in watching her friend's manner. Evidently she had determined on saying something very severe, which should put Julia completely to the blush ; but in her great eagerness and her extreme dulness, she failed entirely, for she merely walked up to the fire-place, stationed herself immediately in front of Julia, and in a sharp, cross tone, said, 'You found fault with my music just now ; I should like to know if you can play it better.'

Julia stared, and answered, 'Oh, dear no ; who would attempt to vie with you ?'

'You are right, Margaret,' exclaimed Miss Cunningham ; 'she cannot play a note. Margaret told me so, just now,' she added, turning to Julia, 'and so I was resolved I would ask you.'

'You are quite welcome to ask anything you like,' replied Julia, coolly. 'I am not in the least ashamed of not being able to play at all. Perhaps I might be, if I pretended to know what I was ignorant of, and then broke down before a large party.'

Miss Cunningham's countenance expressed unutterable feelings of anger and disgust ; and Dora, really alarmed lest a quarrel should ensue, quickly interposed, and, begging they would prepare for their walk immediately, hastened Julia out of the room.

'It is your fault, it is all your fault, Margaret,' exclaimed Lucy, when they were again left together ; 'you are always getting me into scrapes ; and that girl, that odious girl, why did she ever come near the place ?'

'Really, Lucy,' began Margaret, 'I do not see what reason you have to blame me,' and then, recollecting how important it was that her friend should be soothed, she added more gently, 'I could not have supposed any one would behave so rudely as she has done.'

'I shall go home,' said Miss Cunningham ; 'I have had nothing but vexation ever since I came here, and I will not bear it any longer.'

'But Lord Rochford has promised to stay till after New Year's day,' observed Margaret. 'You know we cannot have any one else, because it was poor Edward's birthday.'

'Papa will do as I wish him,' said Lucy ; 'if I want to go home he will not prevent me.'

'And he will do as you wish about London, you may be sure,' continued Margaret, who, in her extreme anxiety, could not avoid recurring to the subject, even at the risk of again exciting Miss Cunningham's vehemence.

'I have told you a hundred and fifty times before,' was the reply, 'that my lessons are quite different from everything else ; you do not think I have been so silly as not to try all I could about it long before this.'

'But you will stay over New Year's day,' said Margaret, coaxingly : 'if we try hard we may be able to manage something together.'

The notion seemed rather plausible, and Miss Cunningham

condescended to say that she would see about it ; perhaps she might, if she were not plagued any more with the school-girls.

‘They will be gone soon,’ said Margaret ; ‘and if you would come with me now, you might get quite out of their way, and not speak to them again.’

‘Where are you going, then ?’ asked Lucy.

‘I wished very much to walk to our old steward’s cottage. He has had a pony training for me some time, just like Dora’s. I want to see it, and mamma always scolds us if we go out of the grounds alone ; but she will not mind if you are with me.’

Miss Cunningham walked to the window to look at the weather, which certainly, but for the cold, would have been very inviting, although the melting of the ice and snow rendered the walks in some places dirty and disagreeable.

‘My pony is much more beautiful than Dora’s,’ said Lucy, ‘and much larger too. I wonder she likes riding such a little thing. Is yours the same size, Margaret ?’

‘I do not know exactly ; but do come and see it, it is not very far. I don’t think Dora will be able to get to the other side of the lake, as she wished, and if so, we shall have the girls back again in a minute.’

‘I shall go away, then,’ said Lucy.

‘Oh, do not do that,’ exclaimed Margaret. ‘You will be so dull, for I cannot be with you, because they will all be setting off, and mamma will find out if I am in the house, and make me stay with them. There is no way of avoiding it, unless we go out.’

‘Is it far ?’ asked Lucy.

‘Oh no, only through the plantations, and then across a field. I do not think we have ever been there with you. The field next to the one we shall go through is very steep indeed, and the river runs at the bottom of it, and I daresay it might be muddy and dirty just by the banks, but our path will not be at all so.’

‘Well,’ said Lucy, sulkily, ‘if we must go, we must ; anything is better than those girls.’

Margaret thought the same ; of all things she dreaded another quarrel, and she hoped, by a little quiet flattery, to bring her friend, when they were alone, into something like good-humour ; and without waiting for Lucy to change her mind, she hurried her up-stairs to prepare for the walk.

Amy, in the meanwhile, was enjoying herself to the utmost. A very short time had sufficed to remove almost all dread of her

father, and only enough remained to increase the interest of his conversation. At first it was entirely about India and his travels ; and Amy listened as she would have done to a romance or a fairy tale, and thought her papa a greater person than ever, as she discovered how much he knew, and the wonders he had seen ; and then again he recurred to his long silence, and the uneasiness he knew it must have occasioned them, and spoke of the eagerness with which he always inquired for letters, and the pleasure it had been to hear from her of all she had been doing ; ‘ though you did not tell me many of the things you mentioned this morning,’ he said,—‘ the little things, I mean.’

‘ I should write differently now, papa,’ replied Amy. ‘ I did not quite know what to say then, and I always fancied you were a great man, and would not care for little trifles.’

‘ But, Amy,’ said Colonel Herbert, ‘ if persons are really great, they can care for, and attend to everything. It is only those who think themselves great, when they are not, who despise trifles.’

‘ It is very nice,’ said Amy ; ‘ but I cannot think now that you really like to hear about my donkey, and my flowers, and my lessons.’

‘ I will tell you when I am tired of it all,’ replied her father ; ‘ but now you must talk to me a little about Emmerton, and your cousins. Do you like them very much, and is it very pleasant staying there?’

‘ I like Dora, papa,’ exclaimed Amy, ‘ so much—so very much. She is so kind, and so thoughtful ; and yet’—she added, pausing—‘ I do not think she is kind and thoughtful either, not to every one, at least.’

Colonel Herbert smiled. ‘ You seem to have made a new discovery,’ he said. ‘ Is Dora’s character such a puzzle to every one?’

‘ I never thought about it before,’ replied Amy ; ‘ and now I do not think I quite know what she is ; but I love her very much, though she is not at all like Miss Morton.’

‘ Miss Morton is the governess, is she not?’ said Colonel Herbert ; ‘ I used to know her very well as a child.’

‘ She is not exactly the governess,’ replied Amy ; ‘ but she teaches my cousins some things, and she has taught me too. Emmerton would be so different if she was not there.’

‘ I thought,’ said Colonel Herbert, ‘ that you were always delighted with Emmerton before your uncle came.’

'Ah! yes,' answered Amy; 'but that was before I knew any better; when I only thought about all the old lords and ladies who they said used to live there. There was nothing real then; but I liked to make them out very good and beautiful—and sometimes I wished I had lived in those days, because no one I could ever hear of was quite good, except mamma and Mrs Walton; now, I never care about such things, for Miss Morton is better, I think, than I ever imagined, and prettier too; don't you think she is?'

'She has a very sweet face, certainly,' replied Colonel Herbert; 'but, Amy, how good you ought to be after being so much with her.'

Amy looked rather grave: 'I have thought of that sometimes,' she said; 'but I hope you will not be very much vexed with me, dear papa; indeed I do mean to try so hard.'

'You must not think I doubted it, my love,' he replied; 'but, you know, we shall be obliged to answer for the use we have made of our friends, just as much as for the use we have made of our money or talents. I do not think, though, that Miss Morton has been thrown away upon you.'

'It was mamma who made me see Miss Morton's goodness,' replied Amy. 'I do not think I should have noticed it half as much if she had not been so like her; and that was the first thing which made me love her. Margaret and Dora did not appear to think anything about her for some time.'

'And do they now?' asked Colonel Herbert.

'I am not quite sure as to Margaret,' replied Amy; 'but I think Dora does, though she will not acknowledge it; and, by and by, I dare say, she will love her as I do, and then Miss Morton will be happier; for it must be very dreadful, papa, to live all by one's self, without any person to care for one.'

'Who does live so, Amy? Not Miss Morton, I am sure, from your account of her.'

'Yes, but indeed she does live alone very much. Rose is a great deal too young to be a companion to her.'

'Does she say herself that she has no one to care for her?'

said Colonel Herbert, looking rather graver than usual.

Amy thought for an instant, and then answered, 'I do not think she would say so, because she told me the other night that wherever God was, was our home; and she is so good, that I daresay loving Him does instead of friends; but, papa, I am afraid I shall never feel like that.'

‘It is a hard lesson,’ replied Colonel Herbert, as he looked at his child, and thought what his feelings would be if he were obliged to part from her. ‘But here we are at the cottage, Amy,’ he added, after a few moments’ silence. ‘I must go over it quickly, for I have but little time to spare.’

Amy eagerly ran into the house, but her father followed more slowly. Every tree and stone served to recall some vision of the past, some walk, or book, or conversation, which at the time he had been hardly conscious of enjoying, but upon which he now looked back with almost melancholy regret. Amy soon noticed the change in his manner ; and leaving him to his own reflections, wandered about by herself, finding sufficient occupation in repeating the instructions which Mrs Herbert had sent to the servants, inquiring for the people in the village, whom she had seldom before left for so long a time, and visiting her pet rabbits and her donkey. It was a slight disappointment to see her father so abstracted ; but the feeling quickly passed away, when he made her go with him into the drawing-room, and began pointing out a few alterations which he hoped to make in the house, and talking of the new piano he intended to procure for her when next he went to London ; and then showed her the books he wished her to read, promising that, if possible, some portion of his time should be given every day solely to her, to perfect her in the knowledge of history and languages, before he took her abroad. Every word realised more fully the blessing of her father’s return ; and though the time thus spent was but short, it was sufficient to open many new sources of enjoyment ; and when at length Colonel Herbert placed her in the carriage by herself, she was so occupied with all he had been saying, that she forgot to give directions for being driven to the rectory, though at another time a visit there would have been her greatest delight. The servants, however, had received previous instructions, and Amy soon found herself in Mrs Walton’s drawing-room, recounting to her all the changes of sorrow and of joy which she had experienced since last they met.

CHAPTER XXV.

MISS CUNNINGHAM'S temper was not likely to be improved by the pleasures of her wintry walk, and this Margaret quickly perceived, for it required all her powers of flattery and persuasion to prevent her from turning back at every step; and although perfectly sensible of the importance of humouring and soothing her, it was impossible to avoid occasionally showing a dislike to cross looks and harsh words. The walk through the plantation was tolerably firm, for the heat of the sun had not entirely penetrated it, but the open field was in many places very unpleasant, and but for the thought of her pony, Margaret would on no account have attempted to proceed. Miss Cunningham slowly followed her, sighing and muttering, and at length, stopping at a gate leading into the adjoining fields, she protested nothing should induce her to move one step farther.

'It is but a very little way,' said Margaret; 'you can see the cottage just among the trees; I daresay the lane will not be as bad as this.'

'You can go by yourself, can't you?' replied Lucy; 'there is no good in both of us getting into a mess.'

'But I wanted to know whether you thought the pony as pretty as Dora's. I am not going to have it, if it is not.'

'Then we must come another day,' was the reply. 'I could as soon wade through a pond as this field.'

'I do think,' said Margaret, looking over the gate, 'that it is much drier in this other field, and there is a bridge down at the bottom over the stream; I should not wonder if we could get to the cottage by going over it.'

As she spoke, Margaret was about to open the gate, when she heard some one repeating her name, and turning round, saw Rose and Miss Morton, who were hastening towards her from the bottom of the field.

'I have been trying,' said Emily, as she came up, 'to find my way to Stephen's cottage, but the lane is in such a state, that it is almost impassable—at least for Rose—so I must beg you to take care of her for a few minutes, while I make another attempt. I shall be within sight, and almost within hearing the whole way.'

'It is very provoking;' observed Margaret, 'is there no mode

of reaching the cottage by the next field and the bridge? it looks a great deal drier.'

'No,' replied Emily, 'you would find a hedge in your way, unless you went a considerable distance round; but can I say anything to Stephen for you? I must see him to-day, for his daughter is ill; and there are some directions for her medicine which no one can give but myself.'

'You may tell him,' said Margaret, 'that I want very much to see the pony; and that I shall not have it, unless it is quite as pretty as Dora's.'

'Shall I say that it is to be sent for?' asked Emily.

'You may if you will—that is, I must speak to papa about it first; but I suppose there will be no objection to my having it to try.'

Miss Morton secretly wished that Margaret would learn to be more grateful and courteous in her expressions; and then charging Rose to walk up and down the field in order to keep herself warm, and on no account to give her sister any trouble, she walked towards the cottage. She was hardly beyond hearing, when Miss Cunningham began complaining of the trouble that had been caused, and wishing that they had not met; declaring, at the same time, that she would not stay in such a bog for any one; it would be much better in the other field, and she should go there.'

'Come, Rose,' said Margaret, opening the gate, 'you must go first. I will lift you over the bad places, and then we can keep to the dry part of the path.'

'I was told to stay here,' said Rose, 'and, besides, I am never allowed to walk in that field, it is so steep, and there is water at the bottom.'

'You must do as you are told by us now,' exclaimed Miss Cunningham, 'so come directly.'

Still Rose resisted. Emily would not like it, she said, and would not be able to find her.

'It does not signify,' observed Margaret, desirous from selfish motives to please her friend in every fancy.

'She can stay here if she wishes it. It can make no difference which side of the gate we are. If you are such a naughty child, Rose, you must remain by yourself, but don't be frightened, we shall not be out of sight.'

Rose was half inclined to follow, but Miss Cunningham shut the gate, and she was prevented. The path certainly was much

drier and more agreeable ; and Margaret and Lucy paced up and down for several minutes, until, catching sight of some animals in a field adjoining the stream, Margaret declared they were horses, and she was sure her pony must be amongst them, and calling to Rose to remain exactly where she was till they came back, she hastened to satisfy her curiosity. Rose begged her not to go out of sight ; but Margaret did not think it worth while to attend ; and although the distance was not very great, the poor child immediately began to fancy she was left, and stood looking anxiously through the gate, and entreating Margaret to return, till she gradually worked herself into a state of great distress, which was brought to its climax, when, on turning round to see if Miss Morton were coming, she perceived that a few cows had been driven into the field, and that one of them was moving rather quickly in her direction. In an agony of alarm, Rose attempted to open the gate, but it resisted all her endeavours ; and then, forgetting everything but her desire to escape from the cows, she made a desperate effort, and succeeded in scrambling over it, and seeing her sister standing by the bridge at the bottom of the field, ran at full speed towards her. Margaret saw, and called loudly to her to be careful, but the poor little girl's fright prevented her from attending, while the swiftness with which she ran, and the steepness of the hill, took from her the power of stopping, and in one moment, while yet unconscious of her danger, her foot slipped ; her head struck against the projecting branch of a tree, and she fell with violence into the water. Margaret's scream of horror was echoed by Miss Cunningham, who immediately ran from the spot, calling loudly for assistance, while Margaret, with greater presence of mind, caught hold of a broken bough that lay upon the ground, and bent over the stream, in the hope of reaching her sister's dress, and so being able to save her. But the rapidity with which it flowed frustrated her hopes, and in another minute all probability of rescuing the unfortunate child would have been at an end, when the man whose cows had been the principal cause of the accident came to her assistance, and by the aid of a longer stick, and more powerful arm, succeeded in placing Rose once more in safety.

Margaret's first feeling was one of overpowering relief and gratitude ; but when she looked at her sister's face as she lay perfectly senseless in the labourer's arms, her terror returned ; and unable to decide upon what was next to be done, she stood by her in silent despair, unconscious of the approach of Miss

Morton, who, alarmed by Miss Cunningham's cries, as she was returning from the cottage, had quickly guessed the cause, and was hurrying towards them, followed by another man.

'To the Hall! carry her to the Hall!' were the first words she said; and they were spoken so calmly, that but for the expression of her countenance, no one could have guessed the extent of her feeling.

The man in an instant obeyed, and strode rapidly across the field, but Emily's anxiety gave her for the time a strength far beyond her nature; and she kept pace with him, and even occasionally outstripped him, urging him at every instant to hasten, for that life and death depended on his speed. Margaret and Miss Cunningham were left far behind, and as they drew near to the house, almost unconsciously, Margaret lingered. Neither she nor Lucy had spoken during their walk, and ample time had been given to both for reflection. At first Margaret had felt stunned by the alarm; but as she thought of meeting her mother, the horrible idea crossed her mind, that she had not been entirely guiltless of the accident.

'O Lucy!' she exclaimed, when they stopped at the Hall door, 'why did we leave her?'

'She will get well soon,' said Miss Cunningham; but her manner was subdued, and she spoke less confidently than usual.

Margaret did not wait to reply, but hurried to Miss Morton's room. Rose, however, had not been carried there, and the house was in such commotion, that it was some time before she could obtain any information as to what had been done; but at last she was told that Mr Harrington had ridden off himself for Dr Bailey, and that Mrs Harrington and Miss Morton were together using every means for restoring the poor child to life. Morris named the room to which Rose had been taken, but when Margaret tried the door, it was bolted; and though there were voices within, no attention was paid to her entreaties for admittance. As she turned away in disappointed misery, Dora met her.

'O Margaret!' she exclaimed, 'is it your doing?'

'No, no,' replied Margaret; 'why are you so cruel as to say it? Do you know how she is?'

'Better,' answered Dora, trying to command herself; 'she has shown signs of life, but they will not let you in.'

'Who will not?' inquired Margaret.

'Mamma and Emily Morton; they are talking together, and they have fastened the door. Hark! you can hear them now.'

Mrs Harrington's voice sounded strangely in the chamber of anxiety and fear. She was evidently in a state of the utmost excitement, and Emily's gentle answers seemed hardly listened to for an instant. Dora and Margaret gazed at each other in silent amazement ; in a few minutes the bolt was hastily and angrily withdrawn, and Emily Morton entered the passage. Dora caught her dress, and was about to speak ; but when she looked in her face, she felt it was impossible. Such intense suffering was expressed in every feature, in her firmly compressed lip, and the ghastly paleness of her cheek, and the contraction of her forehead, that Dora did not dare inquire the cause. Yet, even then, Emily had a thought for others. 'Rose is better,' she said, and pointed to the open door, and then, turning away, she passed in a moment from their sight.

'What can be the matter?' exclaimed Margaret.

'Mamma is angry that Rose was left, I suppose,' replied Dora.

'She would have thought nothing about it, but for the accident,' said Margaret, with a painful consciousness of being infinitely more to blame than Miss Morton.

'I don't know any of the particulars,' observed Dora ; 'no one has had any time to ask ; but I wish you would tell me now.'

Margaret was beginning her account, when the door again opened, and Mrs Harrington seeing them in the passage, called Dora into the room, and ordered Margaret to send Morris to her immediately.

Margaret delivered the message, and then went to the school-room, where she found Miss Cunningham seated by the fire, with a book in her hand, and not only composed, but cheerful.

'You are not unhappy now, Margaret, are you?' she said ; 'I dare say little Rose will be quite well again to-morrow. Susan Reynolds told me just now that she was a great deal better.'

'Yes,' replied Margaret ; 'she is better, certainly, she would not be alive else ; but it is nonsense to talk of happiness. What will mamma say when she knows how it all occurred?'

'Who is to tell her?' said Lucy. 'We need not.'

'No,' replied Margaret ; 'but I rather suspect mamma thinks it is owing to some carelessness of Emily Morton's. She was talking to her very angrily a little while ago, and when Emily came away she looked like a frightened ghost.'

'But it was careless in her. What business had she to trouble us with the care of such a child? she might have known that it would be very inconvenient.

‘If mamma has a notion that it was her fault, she will send her away,’ said Margaret, while a feeling of satisfaction dawned upon her mind as she thought of the London journey.

‘Will she, indeed?’ exclaimed Lucy; ‘then we shall enjoy ourselves after all.’

Margaret shrank from having her own idea put into words. ‘You must not be too sure of that, Lucy,’ she replied: ‘I only said that Emily would be sent away if mamma considered the accident her fault, but, in fact, it was no one’s fault; and this she will find when inquiries are made.’

‘Mrs Harrington is coming now,’ said Lucy: ‘I am sure that is her voice; she is speaking to Dora.’

Margaret trembled extremely. ‘I hope mamma is not going to ask about it, Lucy.’

‘What are you afraid of?’ replied Lucy: ‘we had nothing to do with it.’

Margaret’s conscience did not fully acquit her; but her uneasiness was lessened when her mother entered, still talking to Dora. ‘I have ordered the carriage, and she shall go,’ were her first words. ‘I shall never bear the sight of her again, and she wishes it herself. She says Mrs Walton will receive her.’

‘But was it really her fault, mamma?’ asked Dora.

‘Whose could it be?’ replied Mrs Harrington. ‘She left her—left her in that field, notwithstanding my strict charge to the contrary, for such a child could never have opened the gate: and she must have known that there was danger.’

‘But Margaret and Lucy were near,’ continued Dora.

‘So she says,’ replied Mrs Harrington; ‘but they could not have been, or they would have taken care of her.’

‘Where were you when poor little Rose fell in?’ asked Dora, appealing to her sister.

Margaret was about to reply, but a glance from Miss Cunningham stopped her, and she suffered her to speak instead.

‘We were standing near the bridge, looking for Margaret’s pony; and when we saw what had happened, we ran directly and tried to save her.’

‘I told you so, Dora,’ exclaimed Mrs Harrington, in extreme indignation. ‘I knew she equivocated: she shall not remain in my house another hour.’

Mrs Harrington rang the bell violently, and Dora felt almost too much alarmed to speak; she did, however, suggest that Margaret and Miss Cunningham should tell the whole story, as she

felt certain there must be some mistake. Again Margaret would have replied; but Miss Cunningham, who was standing at her side, pressed her hand as a signal for silence, and at that instant the servant entered.

‘Let the pony-carriage be ordered directly,’ said Mrs Harrington: ‘I wish it to be at the door in an hour’s time. I will not hear another word, Dora,’ she added: ‘the case is quite clear. Go immediately, and let Miss Morton know when the carriage will be ready.’

‘O mamma!’ exclaimed Dora, while tears rushed to her eyes — ‘if you would send Morris.’

‘Dora, I will be obeyed instantly,’ said Mrs Harrington.

‘But Amy is not come home yet, mamma,’ persisted Dora, seizing eagerly upon any chance of a respite.

‘Did you not hear me order the pony-carriage?’ was the answer. ‘Of course, I knew that your cousin was not returned.’

Mrs Harrington left the room, and Dora was about reluctantly to follow, when the servant came back to say that the carriage was just coming down the avenue, and to inquire whether it would make any difference in the order.

Dora for once in her life heartily wished that Amy had remained longer away, for she feared that even less time might now be allowed Miss Morton; and she fancied every delay might be of use. ‘I will ask mamma myself,’ she said, unwilling that anything should be settled without her knowledge. And after lingering a few minutes longer, she walked slowly away; and Margaret and Miss Cunningham were again left alone.

‘I hope you give me credit for my management, Margaret,’ said Lucy. ‘We have had a happy escape.’

‘I don’t know,’ replied Margaret; ‘it must all come out by and by.’

‘Why, I should like to know? Why should anything more be said if we keep our own counsel?’

‘But Emily Morton,’ replied Margaret, ‘she will never allow herself to be sent away without making some defence.’

‘If she does,’ answered Lucy, ‘what will it signify? You may see your mamma does not believe her.’

‘But if mamma should ask us any more questions, we could not tell a story about it, you know.’

‘Did I tell one just now?’ asked Miss Cunningham. ‘Was not every word exactly the truth?’

‘Yes,’ said Margaret; ‘but I think Dora suspects something.’

‘Never mind Dora,’ replied Lucy; ‘she cannot know what we do not choose to tell. It is quite silly of you, Margaret, to be so fidgety; this is just all that we wanted; and if we only take care, we shall go to London, and enjoy ourselves to our hearts’ content. You would have been delighted at the idea yesterday; and now that everything has fallen out just as we wished, you look grave.’

‘It is not just as I wished, though,’ repeated Margaret, rather angrily; ‘it is not at all pleasant to have poor little Rose so ill.’

‘Certainly that is disagreeable,’ said Lucy; ‘but it is a mere trifle; she will be quite well to-morrow; besides, what would you do? You would not dare make a great fuss, and complain of yourself to your mamma.’

‘No, indeed,’ exclaimed Margaret; ‘I would suffer anything first. I should say nothing about it, if Emily Morton were not going.’

‘But that is the very point,’ urged Miss Cunningham. ‘It is the principal reason we have for being silent. London—think of London, Margaret;—and nothing would induce me to go if Miss Morton went too. How much you would miss me if I were not there.’

‘To be sure,’ replied Margaret, after a short pause, ‘we have not said anything that is not true; and Emily Morton is quite able to defend herself; and if mamma will not believe her, it is not our fault.’

‘Certainly not; let us leave her to herself; and when she is once out of the house everything will go right.’

Margaret’s conscience told her that all could not be right; that there was such a thing as a practical falsehood; but she had so long accustomed herself to trifling prevarications, that her self-reproach was not very great. Probably she would not have felt any, if the consequences of her deceit had been less important. Miss Cunningham perceived that she had gained an advantage by the mention of London, and, eagerly pursuing the subject, expatiated in glowing terms upon the amusement they should find there, till Margaret forgot by what means the pleasure was to be obtained; and by the time the conversation was over, was so strengthened in her resolution, that Miss Cunningham’s fears were completely at rest.

CHAPTER XXVI.

TO Dora's relief—her cousin's return made no difference in Mrs Harrington's plan—there was still nearly an hour before her ; and in that time it was barely possible that her papa might return and insist upon Emily's remaining at least another day. It seemed, indeed, the height of cruelty to insist upon her going at such a time, for the state in which poor little Rose continued excited the greatest alarm. She had shown signs of consciousness, but the increasing fever and her continual moanings added every moment to Mrs Harrington's anxiety. She walked from room to room, and from window to window, listening for every sound ; now upon the point of setting off herself in search of Dr Bailey ; then seating herself by the side of her child's bed, with the determination that nothing should induce her to quit it ; and again, as she felt the rapid pulse, and heard the sounds of suffering, starting up with the intention of seeking for some one who might advise her at once what was most necessary to be done. Dora, after remaining a short time, anxious to delay giving the painful information to Emily, went to see her cousin, in the hope of being the first to break to her, gradually, the painful news ; but Amy had not been two minutes in the house before she had heard all, and rather more than all, for the news of Miss Morton's intended departure had spread rapidly, and was of course coupled with the accident.

Amy's first intelligence was, that Miss Morton had left Rose playing by the side of the stream ; that the child had fallen in, and would have been lost but for Miss Cunningham's screams ; that she was not expected to live more than an hour ; and that Miss Morton was to go away immediately. The last words were so surprising, that Amy did not at first entirely comprehend them ; she was bewildered between her deep sorrow for Rose and her dread of Miss Morton's departure ; and stood for a few moments in a state of the most painful indecision, unwilling even to go to her mamma till she had learned the truth more certainly. 'Going,' she repeated ; 'do you really mean that Miss Morton is going now ?'

'Yes, now, Miss,' replied Morris, in a short, pert voice, and rejoicing secretly in the thought of getting rid of any one that patronised Susan Reynolds, who had lately become almost her

rival. 'The carriage is coming round directly. I think Jolliffe is just gone up to the stable to put the ponies in.'

Amy did not wait to hear more. She flew to Emily's room ; but just as she reached it, Dora stopped her.

'O Amy !' she exclaimed, looking earnestly at her, 'I see by your face that you know everything. What is to be done for Emily?'

'I am sure it cannot be true,' said Amy. 'My aunt would never send her away now.'

'But it is quite true,' replied Dora ; 'nothing will have any effect. I have said all I could ; and papa is not here.'

'Where is she going?' said Amy. 'I must run directly, and speak to mamma ; she will entreat for her ; and my aunt will never be able to refuse her. Has no one told mamma about it?'

Dora was about to reply, when Emily Morton opened the door, and in a voice so totally changed that Amy would scarcely have recognised it, asked them to come in.

The room presented a very different aspect from that which it usually wore. The pictures from the walls were lying about on the table and in the chairs ; the floor was covered with trunks, band-boxes, and dresses ; and the books had been taken from the shelves, and were piled together in regular order, preparatory to their being packed.

Amy did not speak ; but Dora exclaimed instantly, 'O Emily ! why should you do this? you cannot manage it yourself.'

'I must be alone,' replied Emily ; and again her voice sounded so strange, that Amy started. The gentle tone which had once sounded so sweet to her ear was changed for one that was unnaturally deep and hollow. There were no traces of agitation in her face—scarcely even in her manner ; but her lips were perfectly colourless, and her eyes were dimmed and sunken.

'You must not,—oh ! you must not go,' exclaimed Amy, throwing herself into her arms, and bursting into tears.

Emily pointed to the floor, and, with a ghastly smile, said, 'Will you help me ? The carriage will be here.'

Dora knelt down and tried to busy herself with the books, but she could not conceal her emotion ; and Emily Morton, as she witnessed for the first time the sympathy of one who had hitherto so painfully neglected her, pressed her lips firmly together, and walked quickly up and down the room.

‘I must go to mamma,’ exclaimed Amy; ‘she will see my aunt directly; and I am sure she will be able to persuade her.’

‘No,’ said Emily, forcing herself to speak, as Amy was about to leave the room; ‘you must not say anything to Mrs Herbert. I went to her myself just now, before everything was settled, that she might not be shocked suddenly; and even then, though I could speak comfortably to her, I could see how much she suffered. She went immediately to Mrs Harrington, and would have remained with her but for your aunt’s insisting to the contrary. I would not for the world that she should be distressed again on my account.’

‘But she will be so very, very sorry,’ said Amy: ‘and I am sure my aunt will listen to her.’

‘Indeed, it must not be,’ replied Emily. ‘Remember what Dr Bailey said; and your mamma will not care so much when she knows where I am going. I have written a note to Mrs Walton, to ask her to receive me for the next few days. I could not go far away whilst ——’ The sentence remained unfinished; but both Dora and Amy knew well what it meant.

‘If you would leave these things,’ said Dora, ‘Amy and I could take care of them for you.’

‘Perhaps it would be best,’ replied Emily, ‘I don’t think I quite know why they were taken down, for I could not pack them in so short a time.’

‘Do you know, then, about the carriage?’ asked Dora.

‘Yes,’ replied Emily; ‘Susan Reynolds told me, and offered to help me; but I sent her away. I want nothing now, excepting to know ——’

‘How Rose is,’ continued Amy. ‘I will go directly, and ask.’

Amy ran out of the room, and Dora followed her. ‘Stop one moment, Amy,’ she said. ‘I don’t think Emily Morton knows about poor little Rose being worse; when she left her, she thought she was better. It will half kill her to go away when she hears it.’

‘Let us both go to my aunt, and beg,’ said Amy, ‘only for one day. If she would just let her stay to-night, I could be happy.’

‘You don’t know mamma,’ replied Dora; ‘she thinks Emily Morton has equivocated.’

‘Oh!’ exclaimed Amy, ‘no one could think so.’

‘Mamma believes it firmly; and so there would be no hope of persuading her. But, Amy, I think there is something hidden—

something which Margaret and Lucy Cunningham know, only they will not tell. I must go back to mamma. But, perhaps, if you were to talk to them, you might find it out ; only be quick.'

'Will you let Miss Morton know about Rose, then ? and I will try ; but I don't know what to say. I wish you could be with me.'

'Indeed I must go,' replied Dora ; 'but I will see poor little Rose myself, and then return to Emily for a minute. You will find Margaret and Lucy in the schoolroom.'

'But what does my aunt say ?' continued Amy. 'Why does she not ask them about it ?'

'She would not listen to me just now,' said Dora ; 'and when I left her she was in such an agony about Rose that I did not dare speak to her ; indeed, Amy, you are the only person who can do anything.'

Amy did not wait to be again entreated, but went instantly to the schoolroom. Margaret and Lucy were still there, as Dora had told her ; and neither of them seemed at all pleased at her interruption.

'Have you seen Rose lately ?' asked Amy, hardly knowing how to begin, and yet extremely anxious that no time should be lost.

'No,' replied Margaret. 'Mamma has sent us word that it is better to keep her quite quiet ; and she begs that no one may go to her room except Dora, unless she rings. Morris is there with her too, I believe.'

'I should so like to see her,' said Amy ; 'I am afraid she is very ill. Do tell me, Margaret, how it was she fell in.'

'She was running fast down the hill,' replied Margaret, 'and could not stop herself. I shall never forget what I felt when I saw what was going to happen.'

'But how did you get into that field ? Somebody said just now you were going to Stephen's cottage ; that is not the way to it.'

'No,' interrupted Miss Cunningham, who began to be uneasy at Amy's questions ; 'we went down to the water to look at the ponies.'

'And I suppose Miss Morton sent Rose to you, then,' said Amy.

'No,' replied Lucy. 'Poor child ! she came running to us of her own accord.'

'I do so wonder at Miss Morton's leaving her,' observed Amy ; 'she is so particular about her in general.'

Miss Cunningham made no reply, and Amy felt quite disheartened. In a few moments, however, she began again—

‘I cannot understand it at all, Margaret. What made Miss Morton and Rose go into that field?’

‘You are very stupid this morning, I think,’ exclaimed Lucy. ‘How can we know what reasons Miss Morton has for doing strange things? And why should you ask so many questions?’

‘Because,’ replied Amy, summoning up all her courage, ‘I cannot think that Miss Morton really did leave Rose all by herself in that dangerous field.’

‘Then what do you think she did?’ asked Lucy.

‘I don’t know; but it would have been much more like her to have left Rose with you.’

‘Then you think,’ exclaimed Miss Cunningham, indignantly, ‘that Margaret and I have been saying what is not true.’

‘I don’t mean to make you angry,’ replied Amy, whose naturally timid disposition was for the moment overawed; ‘but if there is any excuse to be made, Margaret, it would be very, very kind in you to say something to my aunt. I am sure you would, if you saw how miserable Miss Morton is at the idea of going away.’

‘What do you wish me to do?’ asked Margaret. ‘Mamma will not listen to me.’

‘But she would listen to you,’ continued Amy, ‘if you had anything real to tell her,—I mean, not merely an excuse.’

‘I cannot see,’ interrupted Miss Cunningham, ‘why you should interfere and talk to us in this way; you would make out if you could that we had been keeping back something. Miss Morton can tell all there is to be told just as well as we can. Come, Margaret, do let us go up-stairs; I am quite tired of sitting here in my walking things.’

‘No, no,’ exclaimed Amy, seizing her cousin by the dress; ‘pray, Margaret, do not go yet.’

‘What good can I do you by staying?’ said Margaret, whose resolution was somewhat wavering.

‘If you would only tell me,’ persisted Amy, ‘if there is anything that will make my aunt pleased with Miss Morton, I should be so glad. I am sure you never saw any one before look as wretched as she does now.’

Margaret seemed inclined to remain; not that she had any intention of confessing the whole truth, but she was hardly able to resist Amy’s earnest looks.

‘Come, come, Margaret,’ said Lucy; ‘I cannot wait any longer

If you say a word more,' she added, in a whisper, 'it will all come out.'

Amy caught the last words, and eagerly repeated them aloud, 'Then there is something. O Margaret! you would not be so cruel as to hide it!'

'I think you are very unkind and unjust to suspect me of concealing anything, Amy,' replied Margaret, her pride and her fears being awakened by the open accusation. 'You may find out what you will, but you will hear nothing from me; I am not going to stay here to be accused of hiding things.'

Margaret and Lucy had left the room before Amy could resolve on what was next to be said; and when they were gone she felt for some moments in despair of being able to do anything for Miss Morton. The time was quickly passing away; she did not dare go to her aunt; and she did not know what might be the consequence of applying to her mamma. Dora was not to be seen; and there was but a very slight hope that either her father or her uncle would return before Emily's departure; and yet she was fully convinced there was some secret between Margaret and Lucy, which, for private reasons, they did not choose to confess. At first she felt inclined to give up all idea of discovering it, and go again to Miss Morton's room; but the thought of what her distress would be on learning that poor little Rose was getting worse made it seem cruel to rest without another effort; and in the hope of possibly seeing Dora, and obtaining some advice from her, she went up-stairs, and lingered about in the gallery into which Rose's bedroom opened.

The window at the end fronted the terrace; and when Amy looked out, she saw Lord Rochford and Mr Cunningham pacing up and down in earnest conversation. At first she thought very little about them, but after waiting in vain for Dora, the idea struck her, that if something were said to Mr Cunningham he might be able to prevail on his sister to tell the whole truth. With the idea, however, came also the doubt, whether it would be right in her to mention the subject. She was but a child, and he might naturally be very much annoyed at her expressing any suspicion of his sister; and even if Lucy and Margaret had done wrong, it seemed unkind to be the means of exposing them; perhaps, if she waited, her uncle might return, and Dora might be able to speak to him;—at any rate, it would appear presuming and impertinent; and as Miss Morton was only going to Mrs Walton's, she could return again the next day if Mr Harrington

wished it. Of Mr Cunningham's kind feeling towards herself, Amy had little doubt ; he had shown it in the most marked way, especially since he had overheard the conversation on the preceding evening ; and but for this it would hardly have been possible to think of taking so great a liberty ; but with the certainty that he would willingly assist her, if it were in his power, she could not entirely banish from her mind the thought of applying to him. Again and again she endeavoured to decide whether it would be right, but still her mind continued in the same painful state of indecision. The thought of Emily Morton made her determine to go at once and beg him to interfere ; and the remembrance that it would appear unkind and unsuited to her age, made her shrink from the idea, and resolve to wait patiently a short time longer in the hope of seeing Dora. Very earnestly she longed to go at once to her mamma ; but it would vex Emily, and perhaps might make Mrs Herbert ill, and Lucy and Margaret would consider her very ill-natured. This last argument, however, did not seem a powerful one. If it were unkind to them to mention the subject, it would be still more unkind to Emily Morton to be silent : and again poor Amy began to doubt, and stood at the window looking at Mr Cunningham, and wishing with all her heart that some one would appear to tell her what she ought to do. Whilst still hesitating, Susan Reynolds came into the gallery, followed by Morris, the only one of the servants who had admission into the chamber of the sick child. Amy was going to beg that her cousin Dora might be sent to her, but Morris's movements were too quick ; the bedroom door was opened but for one instant ; and when it closed, Amy was so vexed and disappointed that her fortitude entirely gave way.

'O Miss Herbert !' exclaimed Susan, as she noticed her distress, 'pray don't cry so ; Miss Rose may get better after all ; though, to be sure, Morris says she never saw a poor child so ill before in all her life.'

'Is she so very much worse, then ?' said Amy.

'Oh yes, Miss,' replied Susan. 'Morris says, if the doctor does not soon come, she thinks it will be no good having sent for him. She is quieter now ; but a little while ago she was moaning, when I passed the door, so that one might hear her all along the gallery. And, oh ! Miss Herbert, isn't it dreadful about Miss Morton's going away?—she who is so good and kind to every one. And what shall I do without her ?'

‘I wonder whether Rose asks for her?’ said Amy.

‘She did at first, I believe, Miss,’ answered Susan; ‘but Morris says she is all wild and wandering again now, and does not know any one.’

‘Oh! how I wish I knew what to do,’ exclaimed Amy, forgetting that Susan was near.

‘Miss Morton will never see Miss Rose again, I should think,’ said Susan, ‘if she goes away now. Mrs Bridget and Morris, and all of them, think she won’t live out the night.’

‘And does Miss Morton know it?’ inquired Amy.

‘She does now, Miss,’ replied Susan. ‘She asked me herself, and I was obliged to tell. And it was miserable to see how she looked; I thought she would have gone off quite.’

Amy made no reply, but turned to the window to see if Mr Cunningham were still below. While Susan was speaking she had made up her mind as to what was to be done. Emily’s wretchedness overcame every other consideration; and without further delay she hastened to the terrace. Mr Cunningham paused in his conversation directly he saw her; and when she came up, breathless and silent from fear and agitation, he inquired eagerly for Rose.

‘May I speak to you?’ replied Amy, unheeding his question. ‘Pray don’t be angry with me.’

‘What! secrets!’ exclaimed Lord Rochford; ‘then I suppose I had better go; but you must tell me first how it is all going on with the poor little darling.’

‘She is very ill indeed,’ answered Amy; ‘and my aunt is very much frightened about her.’

‘It is a bad business,’ said Lord Rochford. ‘I wonder Mr Harrington ever trusted such a young creature as Miss Morton.’

‘Oh! indeed,’ answered Amy; ‘Miss Morton did not leave her—at least I don’t think she did. It was that I wanted to speak about,’ she added, hardly daring to look in Mr Cunningham’s face.

Lord Rochford walked away; and Mr Cunningham, in the kindest manner, begged her not to be frightened, but to tell him at once if he could be of any use. ‘We are old friends now,’ he said, with a smile; ‘and if you take my part, I must take yours in return.’

‘Miss Morton is going away,’ said Amy, feeling that her courage would entirely fail her, if she did not enter upon the subject at once.

Not now,' exclaimed Mr Cunningham, in surprise; 'not while little Rose is so ill.'

'Yes,' replied Amy; 'the carriage has been ordered, and she is to go this afternoon. My aunt believes,' she continued, speaking very quickly, 'that Miss Morton has not told all the truth about having left Rose in the field alone; and so she says she must go directly. But Margaret and Miss Cunningham were there too, and I think——'

'What do you think?' said Mr Cunningham. 'Had they anything to do with it?'

'I don't know,' replied Amy; 'but when I spoke to them just now, they did not seem quite to like telling me everything; and I thought that perhaps if you were to ask Miss Cunningham, she would not mind talking to you, and then you might be able to find out something which might prevent my aunt from being so displeased, and she might allow Miss Morton to stay till Rose gets better.'

'I am not sure that I entirely understand what you mean,' said Mr Cunningham. 'Let me hear again what you wish me to do.'

'If you would go to Miss Cunningham,' repeated Amy, 'and ask her to tell you the whole story, perhaps you would find out that Miss Morton did not leave Rose quite alone, as my aunt thinks she did. Margaret says they were a great way from her when she fell in; but then they might have been near her before.'

'And will they not talk plainly?' said Mr Cunningham, looking very much annoyed.

'They would only say a little,' answered Amy; 'and then they went away. And I do not think they liked me to ask them any questions.'

Mr Cunningham was fully aware of Amy's meaning, though she had endeavoured to express it as gently as possible. He had long and anxiously watched his sister's disposition, and had noticed too often the deceit which she did not hesitate to practise when it suited her purpose, for him to be surprised on the present occasion. If she had had any share in the accident, she would certainly be desirous of concealing it: yet the thought was extremely painful; and his countenance, as he walked with hasty steps towards the door, made Amy fear that she had offended him deeply. 'I am afraid,' she said, 'that I have done wrong; but I was very unhappy, and the hour is nearly up, and then

Miss Morton will go, and perhaps she will never see little Rose again.'

'You have been right—quite right,' replied Mr Cunningham. 'But I must see Lucy directly : where shall I find her?'

'She is in her bedroom, I believe,' said Amy. 'She will think me very unkind.'

'You need not be afraid,' he answered. 'No one shall think anything of you but what is right and good. You must not let Miss Morton go till you have seen me again.'

The words were quite a reprieve to poor Amy, though she knew how great an offence it would be to keep the carriage waiting ; for Mr Cunningham had been so kind to herself, that even if her suspicions were unfounded, and Rose had really been left carelessly, he might perhaps speak to Mrs Harrington, and prevail on her to change her determination. With this idea she was going immediately to Miss Morton to give her the hope of remaining, when Dora stopped her. 'Well, Amy,' she exclaimed, 'what have you done?'

'Nothing,' replied Amy ; 'at least, nothing with Margaret : but I have done something which I hope will be of use ; I have spoken to Mr Cunningham.'

Dora started. 'O Amy ! how could you be so bold ? If I had been ever so great a favourite, I never could have done such a thing as that.'

'I could do anything for Miss Morton,' replied Amy. 'But, Dora, do tell me how Rose is.'

'Very much the same. Mamma is becoming dreadfully anxious ; she can think of nothing else : if she could, I would have made one more effort for poor Emily. I wished we had asked her just now, when we were with her, to tell us everything just as she told mamma, for I am sure mamma did not half understand it. I did not think of it at the time, for it all seemed to have happened so suddenly, and everything was so confused.'

'Supposing we were to go now,' said Amy : 'I am sure she must wonder what has become of us.'

'I am afraid I cannot,' replied Dora ; 'for mamma begged me to come back again directly. I was only allowed to leave her because she wished so much to know if there were any signs of papa or Dr Bailey coming down the road. I wish I could hear all you said to Mr Cunningham. But we must not stop now : you had better go to Emily.'

‘I will beg her to repeat the story, if you think it would be any good,’ said Amy.

‘I am afraid that nothing would make mamma listen to anything from us now,’ replied Dora : ‘we must trust to Mr Cunningham. Lucy would hardly dare be deceitful with him ; and I am sure Margaret would not.’

‘I would give anything to know what he has been saying since we have been here,’ observed Amy.

‘You will know in a few minutes, if it is anything good,’ said Dora. ‘But I wish you would go now, and give poor Emily a little hope : and you may tell her that Rose has not been worse within the last quarter of an hour.’ And as she said this, Dora walked away, and Amy went to Miss Morton’s room.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR CUNNINGHAM did not find his sister in her room ; she had gone down-stairs again with Margaret, who could not endure to remain long stationary in one place, while there was so much cause for anxiety about her little sister. She fancied that it would be easier to learn what was going on by remaining in the schoolroom ; and though fully resolved to allow everything to take its course, and not to say anything in Miss Morton’s favour, she was still too uneasy to attend much to her friend’s entreaties, that she would not put herself in the way of being again questioned by Amy or Dora.

Miss Cunningham was standing with her back to the door when her brother came into the room, and was much startled when she turned round and perceived him near her ; for she saw immediately from his countenance, that something disagreeable was coming.

‘I have been looking for you, Lucy,’ he said, in a voice rendered even more confused than usual by his eagerness, and the irritation of his feelings. ‘I wanted to speak to you particularly.’

‘What about ?’ replied Lucy, with as indifferent a manner as she could assume.

‘You may easily guess what,’ he answered ; ‘this sad accident — you were near the spot ; how did it happen ?’

‘I cannot tell you all,’ said Lucy. ‘We were standing near the bridge, and just saw poor little Rose run from the top of the field, and fall in; and then we went to help her.’

‘But it is impossible,’ observed Mr Cunningham, ‘that Miss Morton should have left a child of that age quite alone. Are you sure she did not give you any charge about taking care of her?’

‘I suppose she thought,’ said Margaret, anxious to evade a reply, ‘that as we were in sight it did not signify.’

‘But,’ continued Mr Cunningham, ‘if Miss Morton left Rose at the top of the field, and you were near the bridge, she could not have considered your being there as any security: in fact, I doubt if she could have seen you; you must have been nearer at first.’

‘How you puzzle one, George!’ exclaimed his sister. ‘How is it possible to remember everything that happened, when we were all so frightened? I am sure I have felt bewildered ever since.’

‘Very possibly,’ replied Mr Cunningham, coolly. ‘But you will have the goodness not to be bewildered now: I must know the whole of this matter. Miss Morton is going away at a moment when it must be most distressing to her feelings, upon a charge of great neglect of duty. And I will find out whether the charge be true or false.’

Lucy looked very frightened; she knew her brother’s determination of character, and saw that there was no chance of escape, unless she chose to tell an actual falsehood; and this, notwithstanding her propensity to equivocation and deceit, she could not make up her mind to do. Margaret endeavoured to steal away unobserved: but Mr Cunningham prevented her. ‘You will excuse me; but this is a case in which I must be allowed to have my own way. I must beg you to remain; you may perhaps be able to assist Lucy’s memory.’

Margaret’s colour went and came very quickly, her knees trembled, and her hand shook: but she did not dare disobey; and seated herself again, with her face turned from Mr Cunningham, and with the secret resolution of not speaking, if there were any possibility of avoiding it.

‘Now, Lucy,’ said Mr Cunningham, again appealing to his sister, ‘I shall ask you one simple question, and I expect a decided answer. Did Miss Morton leave you in charge of Rose?’

‘Really,’ said Lucy, hesitatingly, ‘I can’t—I don’t—you are very cross this afternoon, George, to come and tease us so, when you know how we have been frightened, and how very unhappy Margaret is.’

‘No one can be more sorry for the cause of her unhappiness than I am,’ he replied; ‘and when my question is answered, I will on no account tease either of you again. Perhaps you did not quite understand what I said; I will repeat it. Did Miss Morton leave you in charge of Rose?’

‘You are vexing Margaret, I can see,’ replied Lucy. ‘I never thought you could be so unkind before. We came here to be quiet and alone.’

‘This is mere trifling, Lucy,’ said her brother. ‘You know full well that it will not answer with me; nothing will shake my determination of knowing the truth; and therefore the best thing you can do is, without any further equivocation, to tell me plainly what I wish to know.’

There was a pause when Mr Cunningham had spoken; neither Lucy nor Margaret saw the least chance of evading the question, yet neither felt inclined to answer it. Mr Cunningham placed himself in front of his sister, looking at her calmly and sternly, and patiently waiting till she chose to reply; whilst she endeavoured to keep her determination of steadfastly gazing out of the window, and taking no notice of him. But it would not do; she stood far too much in awe of him to resist long; and at length, bursting into a fit of angry tears, she exclaimed, ‘I wish Miss Morton, and Rose, and all the family, had stayed at Wayland all their lives, instead of coming here to make me miserable.’

‘Then it is true,’ said Mr Cunningham. ‘You were left in charge of the poor little girl, and you went away from her; and then, when the accident occurred, you were too cowardly to take the blame upon yourselves, but occasioned great unhappiness to an innocent person, by allowing her to be accused unjustly. Yes, Lucy,’ he continued, observing that his sister rose hastily from her seat, and was about to leave the room, ‘you may well be anxious to hide yourself; but you will not be allowed to go till you have made the only reparation in your power. You will confess your fault to Mrs Harrington; I shall let her know instantly the mistake under which she has been labouring.’

‘Pray, pray, don’t leave me,’ cried Lucy, as Margaret tried to escape. ‘Why am I to bear it all? you know it was quite as much your doing as mine.’

But Margaret did not choose to attend ; she was willing to be Miss Cunningham's friend when everything went smoothly, but she saw no reason for putting herself in the way of her mother's anger unnecessarily. And Mr Cunningham, having gained his point, hardly felt justified in interfering any farther. Without again speaking to Lucy, he wrote a note to Mrs Harrington, apologising for intruding upon her distress, but begging her to allow him a few moments' conversation on a subject of much consequence. And when the servant returned with the answer, he merely said to his sister, 'Mrs Harrington will be here directly ; you had better make up your mind to tell the truth in as few words as possible. It will be out of your power to conceal anything, as Miss Morton's own account will certainly be compared with yours.'

Mrs Harrington's mind was now in a very different state from what it had been when Lucy had last seen her. The moments spent by her little girl's sick-bed had increased her anxiety, and subdued the irritation of her temper. Her feeling against Miss Morton was deeper, but less vehement ; and occasionally, as she had listened to the moaning of the suffering child, and heard her repeat Emily's name with a wandering entreaty that she would come to her, her heart had relented, as she had felt inclined, for the sake of poor little Rose, to allow Emily to continue at Emmerton a few days longer. But on a second consideration the idea vanished ; and her only wish then was, never again to be compelled to see or speak to a person whose neglect she believed had been the cause of so much wretchedness. Still Mrs Harrington was outwardly much calmer ; and her harsh tones sounded as coldly as ever when she asked Mr Cunningham to do her the favour of mentioning his wishes quickly, as she could not be spared from her child's room.

'It is my sister's business rather than mine,' he replied. 'She has been induced, from fear of your displeasure, to conceal her own share in this most unfortunate accident ; and she is now going to confess the truth, in hopes that you will allow Miss Morton to remain.'

'It was Margaret,' exclaimed Miss Cunningham ; 'I never should have moved from the gate but for her. I only went to the other side, at first, because it was drier ; and then it did not signify ; but it was Margaret who begged me to go down to the bridge, and look at the pony.'

'And do you mean then,' said Mrs Harrington, 'that Miss

Morton left Rose with you, and that you went away from her?’

‘We only went into the steep field because it was dry,’ answered Lucy; ‘and Rose was quite in safety.’

‘I do not entirely understand you,’ said Mrs Harrington. ‘Perhaps you will have the goodness to explain yourself more clearly.’

Miss Cunningham complied with evident reluctance, yet she did not venture to distort any of the facts, knowing that her brother would easily discover the whole truth upon a reference to Miss Morton. She only endeavoured to lay as much of the blame as possible upon Margaret, and to make Mrs Harrington believe that she would have spoken before if she had understood the cause of Miss Morton’s sudden departure. The excuse, however, was too weak to succeed; a bitter smile curled Mrs Harrington’s lip as she said, ‘You need not trouble yourself to give your reasons for what you have done; your brother, I am sure, must be as fully aware of them as I am. Margaret’s conduct I shall inquire into immediately. I am afraid,’ she added, turning to Mr Cunningham, ‘there is a heavy punishment in store for her thoughtlessness and selfishness. My poor little girl is very ill.’

The real feeling which was expressed in these words, and in the tone in which they were uttered, touched Mr Cunningham deeply; and his voice faltered as he replied, ‘It would be a punishment felt by very many; but we will hope and pray that it may please God to avert it.’

‘I will counter-order the carriage,’ said Mrs Harrington, recovering herself, and ringing the bell; ‘and I will inform Miss Morton of the change.’

‘Perhaps, at the same time,’ observed Mr Cunningham, ‘you would allow me to order our own. My father was speaking to me, just now, of the wish you had expressed this morning, that our visit should be prolonged; and doubting if it would be advisable after what has now transpired. Of course, we would on no account intrude upon you; my sister’s presence, I fear, will never again be anything but painful.’

Mrs Harrington could not contradict his words, and felt at a loss for a reply, when the entrance of the servant relieved her from the awkwardness. The carriage, which had just come to the door, was remanded; and a summons was sent for Miss Morton.

‘You had better prepare for going immediately, Lucy,’ said

her brother. 'And if you have anything farther to say to Mrs Harrington, any apology to make for your conduct, or any message to leave for Miss Morton as a proof that you are really sorry for the pain your deceit has occasioned her, you had better speak at once.'

Lucy, however, did not speak—at least she did not say what her brother desired; but, muttering sulkily that it was very hard she should have all the blame, and Margaret none, without venturing to look at Mrs Harrington, left the room.

Mr Cunningham quickly followed, in no very enviable state of feeling. He saw, from Mrs Harrington's manner, that she was seriously alarmed for Rose; and his sister's indifference was startling to him. He could not have supposed it possible that she would have been so insensible to the probable consequence of her neglect; for, with a disposition peculiarly free from selfishness himself, he did not understand how soon it blinds us to the sufferings of others, and how quickly it buries, if not entirely destroys, even in very early life, every better feeling of human nature. Miss Cunningham was not entirely cold-hearted; it is a rare thing, indeed, to find any one who is. But she was from nature and education intensely selfish; and it was this which made her dwell only upon the blame she had incurred herself, when others might have grieved for the misery they had caused their friends.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MRS HARRINGTON'S message was delivered to Miss Morton at the moment when her uneasiness was becoming extreme; and she was endeavouring to make up her mind to go, without waiting for the effect of Mr Cunningham's interview with his sister. The carriage had been announced, and Mr Harrington's well-known dislike to its being kept waiting made her feel it wrong to delay; though Amy, whose hopes of Mr Cunningham's success, and dread lest Emily should never see Rose again, overcame every other consideration, entreated her to wait, if it were only for five minutes, in the certainty that they must soon hear something from him.

'It is only deferring the evil moment,' said Emily. 'I have

been trying to collect resolution to bear it, and I hope I can now. It might be worse an hour hence. The last accounts were more comfortable; and I know your mamma will manage that I should hear again to-night. I wish I could see her; but it will be better not. You must say how I thought of her, and of the kindness she has shown me.'

'It cannot signify for once,' observed Amy, 'if the carriage is kept a few minutes. I am almost sure Mr Cunningham will be able to do something.'

'It is not real kindness to tell me so,' replied Emily; 'I shall only feel it the more difficult to do what is right. Indeed, I must go.'

'Oh no!' exclaimed Amy, trying to stop her, as she moved towards the door; and at that moment Susan's knock was heard. 'It is all right now,' said Amy, when the message was repeated; 'my aunt never would have sent for you if she had not changed her mind.'

Emily thought the same, though she scarcely ventured to hope it; and Amy's anxiety was nearly at an end, when Susan, who guessed her feelings, told her that the carriage had been sent away. Miss Morton did not hear her exclamation of pleasure, or she would perhaps have trembled less on entering the school-room; but Mrs Harrington's countenance very soon reassured her. She was evidently aware of having behaved with impatience and injustice, and desirous of making amends, though her tone and manner would have seemed painfully repelling in any other person. Emily, however, thought of nothing but the purport of her words. They were few and chilling; but she acknowledged that she had been wrong in her opinion as to Miss Morton's neglect, and said she was sorry that Margaret and Miss Cunningham had allowed her to remain so long in error. Their conduct was highly culpable—in fact, quite unpardonable; and Margaret should certainly be spoken to most seriously on the subject. But at that moment it was impossible to think of anything but Rose; and she should be obliged if Miss Morton would go with her to the poor child's room, that they might see if it were possible to take any measure for allaying the fever before Dr Bailey arrived.

Notwithstanding the set, formal style of this speech, it was received by Emily with the most sincere gratitude, for she knew that it must have been a great effort for a person of Mrs Harrington's proud temper; and, considering only the intention, she

followed her with a sensation of indescribable relief, which, on any other occasion, would have appeared quite incompatible with her great anxiety. Amy was waiting in the passage, and delayed her for one instant to ask if all were right. The question was scarcely needed, for Emily's change of countenance was a sufficient index to her mind; and Amy, as she heard her whisper, 'It is your doing, and I shall never forget it,' felt completely satisfied.

She was now at liberty to go to her mother, who, she feared, might be astonished at her absence. But Mrs Herbert had not long known her return from the cottage, and was only just beginning to wonder why she did not come to her.

Amy was full of eagerness to tell all that had passed; but her mother's first inquiry was for Rose.

'Your aunt particularly begged me to leave her,' she said; 'and I found that whilst Miss Morton was there I could not be of any use. But I really cannot remain here. I can see none of the servants; and I do not like constantly to ring, because of giving them additional trouble when there must be so much to be attended to.'

'I don't think they are engaged particularly now, mamma,' replied Amy. 'Poor little Rose is quieter, and my aunt does not know what more to do.'

'Perhaps, then,' said Mrs Herbert, 'she would not object to my being with her. I should have no occasion to exert myself much, and I might be some comfort to Miss Morton at least.'

'A little while since,' said Amy, 'I am sure Miss Morton would have been more glad to see you, mamma, than any one else in the world—she was so very miserable; but she would not let me tell you, because she said it would worry you and make you ill.'

'What do you mean?' asked Mrs Herbert; 'has anything been going on in which I could have been of use?'

Amy soon related the whole affair, and concluded by anxiously asking whether her mamma thought she had done wrong in applying to Mr Cunningham.

'No,' said Mrs Herbert; 'I think, considering all the circumstances, you were quite right. It would have been a cruel thing for Miss Morton to have been sent away now. But have you seen Mr Cunningham since? and do you know whether he is going?'

'I rather think he is,' replied Amy, 'for I heard one of the

servants saying something about Lord Rochford's carriage, as I crossed the hall; and I hope so, very much, for I should not know what to say if I were to see him again. I could not thank him for having found out that his sister had done wrong; and yet it was very kind of him. But, mamma, do you really think poor little Rose is so ill?'

'I am very much alarmed for her, my dear, she is so young to receive such a shock; and I have often thought her delicate, myself, though no one agreed with me.'

'What will Miss Morton do?' said Amy.

'She will feel it very bitterly,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'Rose was her chief earthly comfort; but she will not murmur.'

'And all her long life to come,' said Amy, 'there will be nothing to look to—nothing that she will care for.'

'Yes,' replied Mrs Herbert, 'there will be things to care for—and there must be, while she has duties to perform; and it is distrusting the love and providence of God to think that He will not give her comfort and peace again. If her mind were different, it might be feared that she required years of suffering to perfect her character; but as it is, we may hope and believe that she will never be entirely destitute even of earthly happiness.'

'I cannot bear to think of her,' exclaimed Amy, while the tears rushed to her eyes. 'It seems so hard—so very hard, that she should suffer. And Rose, too,—O mamma! she is so young to die.'

'And therefore, my dear, it is the greater mercy that she should be taken from a sinful world. Do you not remember that beautiful verse in the Bible?—"The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." If death is thus sent as a blessing to the good, surely we may think that it is sent equally in love to the innocent.'

'Mamma,' replied Amy, as she looked in her mother's face, 'you say so; but I am sure it makes you very unhappy.'

'I cannot talk about it now' said Mrs Herbert; 'it will only unfit me for doing what I can to comfort your aunt and uncle, and Miss Morton. When your papa returns, I shall certainly go and beg them to let me be with them.'

'I think,' observed Amy, listening at the door, 'I can hear a noise down-stairs as if some one were just come.'

'I wish it may be your uncle and Dr Bailey,' said Mrs Herbert.

'No,' replied Amy; 'it is papa; I am sure it is his voice. He is talking to Bridget; and she will keep him so long.'

But Colonel Herbert was not a person to be detained by any one when he did not choose it. He quickly learned the outline of what had happened, and then hurried away to learn more of the details from his wife. Mrs Herbert, however, would not remain long with him. She could not endure the idea of being away from Rose, when every fresh account served only to increase her alarm; and, leaving Amy to answer all his questions, she went to Mrs Harrington with an earnest request to be allowed to stay in the room, even if it were not in her power to be of use.

Mrs Harrington was by this time in a state of such nervousness and excitement, that she scarcely comprehended what was said. She knew only that Mr Harrington ought to have returned long before; and that his continued delay might be fatal to the life of her child. Miss Morton did her utmost to soothe her; but her own anxiety was very great. Rose still continued in the same state, tossing from side to side, and occasionally fixing her eyes upon Emily, as she bent over her, with the fixed, unnatural gaze, which told, even more plainly than words, that reason had fled.

Dora took the opportunity of her aunt's presence to leave the room. She wished very much to see Margaret, and talk a little to Amy; and felt oppressed and confused by the sight of an illness which painfully recalled all she had suffered on her brother's account, only a few months before. Any active exertion would have been easily borne; but to sit by the side of a sick-bed, perfectly powerless, required a patient, trusting spirit, which as yet Dora was far from possessing. And she watched with astonishment the calm self-composure with which Emily Morton did all that was necessary for Rose, and then turned to Mrs Harrington to suggest a reason for Dr Bailey's delay, or give her some hope that the symptoms were rather more favourable.

Colonel Herbert was listening to Amy with a deep yet painful interest when Dora knocked at the door. She would have gone away, on seeing him; but he would not allow it, and, placing an arm-chair by the fireside, made her sit down, and begged her to stay with Amy, just as long as she liked; for he was sure she

must want some one to talk to when she was in so much distress Amy evidently did not quite like her papa to go away; and Dora, vexed at having interrupted their conversation, entreated him so earnestly to stay, that he could not refuse, though he determined not to be a restraint upon them for more than a few minutes.

‘Papa knows everything now,’ said Amy. ‘I had just finished telling him when you came in.’

‘I met Lord Rochford’s carriage on the road,’ observed Colonel Herbert; ‘and they stopped, and told me what had happened. I am afraid, Dora, your poor mamma must be in a dreadful state of suspense and alarm.’

‘I think Margaret is more unhappy than any one,’ said Dora. ‘She was crying so bitterly when I went to her room just now; and she had fastened her door, and would not let me in at first.’

‘She will never forgive me for having spoken to Mr Cunningham,’ said Amy.

‘Yes,’ replied Colonel Herbert; ‘she will forgive everything when she can forgive herself.’

‘Now Lucy is gone,’ said Dora, ‘she is left quite alone; and she thinks every one in the house is complaining of her, and that she is the cause of all mamma’s misery; and she does not dare go out of her room for fear of meeting her.’

‘I wish she would let me go to her,’ said Amy; ‘I am sure she must think I have been very unkind. But indeed I did not mean to make her so wretched; I only thought of Miss Morton.’

‘She cares more about poor Rose now than anything else,’ replied Dora. ‘She says it will make her miserable for life, if she does not get better. And I know I should feel just the same. It would be so very dreadful to think of having caused such an accident.’

‘But,’ said Colonel Herbert, ‘it certainly seems to me that Margaret’s deceit in Miss Morton’s case was far worse than her having left Rose.’

‘Only the consequences may be so much worse,’ said Dora.

‘The consequences of our actions are not in our own power, my dear Dora,’ answered her uncle. ‘If we look to them, we may just as well say that Miss Morton ought to be miserable, or the poor man who drove the cows into the field, they all had a share in the accident.’

‘Certainly,’ said Dora, ‘when Margaret and I were talking

together just now, we traced it all back to Julia Stanley and Mary Warner. It was they who made Lucy so angry. And if it had not been for that, Margaret says she never should have asked her to go out ; and then Emily Morton would not have left poor little Rose with them, and the accident would not have happened. How unhappy they would be if they knew all that had occurred from their laughing at Lucy and saying foolish things.'

'It is a great blessing,' said Colonel Herbert, 'that we are not in general permitted to see the consequences of our actions ; if we were, we should be afraid either to move or speak ; but I believe God sometimes does show them to us, in order to make us fearful of doing the slightest thing that is wrong. When we have once known all the evils that a hasty word or selfish action may bring upon ourselves or upon others, we shall learn how carefully we ought to walk through life, avoiding, as the Bible says, even the appearance of evil.'

'But, papa,' said Amy, 'if we do not think of the consequences of what we do, how shall we ever be able to tell what is right ?'

'Do you not see, my dear child,' replied Colonel Herbert, 'that we never can tell the consequences of anything ? we do not know what is going to happen the next minute ; and therefore we must have some other guide.'

'It is very difficult sometimes to find out what is right,' said Amy.

'The best way of discovering our duty, my dear,' replied her father, 'is to have a sincere wish of doing it. People puzzle themselves because they do not really make up their minds to fulfil their duty, whatever may happen. They wish to escape if they can ; and then they begin to think of the consequences, and so they become bewildered, and at last nearly lose their power of discerning right from wrong. You know, Amy, what our Saviour calls "an honest and true heart ;" if we possess that, we have a better guide for our conduct than any which the wisest philosopher could give us.'

'I think I wished to do what was right just now, papa,' said Amy ; 'but yet I could not make up my mind about it.'

'I do not mean to say,' answered Colonel Herbert, 'that we shall always be able to decide at once ; but I am sure that, if we patiently wait and pray to God to assist us, we shall find that something will happen, as was the case with yourself when you

could not resolve upon speaking to Mr Cunningham, which will make it quite clear to us where our duty lies ; only, generally speaking, persons cannot endure suspense and doubt, and so they act hastily, even with good intentions, and then blame themselves when it is too late.'

'What did happen just now?' asked Dora.

Amy hesitated for a reply ; she could not repeat the fears that were entertained for Rose ; but her father came to her assistance, 'One of the servants had seen Miss Morton,' he replied, 'and told her that your poor little sister was not so well ; and the description of Miss Morton's distress decided Amy upon applying to Mr Cunningham.'

'I would give all the world,' exclaimed Dora, 'if Dr Bailey were come ; and it would ease Margaret's mind so much too.'

'I wish it were possible to comfort her,' observed Colonel Herbert ; 'but I am afraid it would be out of the power of any one at present.'

'Oh, if Rose should but get well !' exclaimed Dora, 'we shall all be happy again then.'

'Yes,' replied her uncle ; 'but do you not see, my dear Dora, that nothing can really make any difference in Margaret's conduct ?'

'Indeed, uncle,' said Dora, 'it would be impossible not to feel differently.'

'I will quite allow that,' replied Colonel Herbert ; 'and I am not wishing so much that Margaret should care less about Rose, as that she should care more about Miss Morton. The one fault was far greater than the other ; and we must never forget that sorrow for the consequences of our faults is not repentance ; it will not keep us from sinning again when the temptation offers. The only sorrow which can really be of service to us is that which makes us shrink from an evil action when it is done in secret, and apparently without having any effect upon others. I mean,' he added, seeing Dora look surprised, 'that we must learn to dread deceit, and selfishness, and vanity, for their own sake, because they are hateful to God, not because they make us disliked by our fellow-creatures.'

Dora could not entirely see the distinction ; she thought her uncle harsh in his manner of speaking of Margaret ; and Colonel Herbert soon perceived by her silence that she did not enter into what he had been saying ; he did not, however, like to pursue the subject any further, for it hardly seemed the moment to discuss

questions of right and wrong, when Dora's mind was in a state of so much anxiety ; and he therefore contented himself with begging her not to think that he could not feel for Margaret most sincerely, because he wished that she could see her actions in a just point of view. 'I am a stranger to her as yet,' he said ; 'but I shall hope soon to show how real an interest I take in her, and in all of you. Even if I were not so nearly connected, I could not forget the kindness and affection you have shown to Amy, and that some of her happiest moments have been spent with you.'

Dora's heart was a little softened by this speech ; neither could she easily resist the polished dignity of Colonel Herbert's manner, which gave a peculiar charm to every expression of feeling. She did not, however, choose to acknowledge it, and exclaimed, when he left the room, 'Your papa is so different from every one else, Amy ; he almost frightens me. I wonder you could talk to him as you did this morning.'

'I don't feel comfortable always,' said Amy ; 'especially just at first when I begin ; but afterwards I forget everything but the pleasure of having him home again, and then I can get on quite well.'

'I wish Julia Stanley had talked to him a little,' observed Dora ; 'he would have put her down delightfully.'

'I wanted to ask you a few questions about her and the others,' said Amy ; 'but there has been no time ; and no one has been able to think of common things. Perhaps, though, you would rather not tell me about them now.'

'Yes, I would,' replied Dora. 'I think it does me good to forget for a few minutes. I sat in that room just now, looking at poor little Rose, and watching mamma's misery, till I felt as if I could not breathe—there was such a weight upon me ; and it will come back again presently.'

'Don't fancy that,' replied Amy ; 'it may all be right by and by.'

'I cannot think so,' said Dora. 'I have often had a fear about Rose, though I hardly know why ; but she was so beautiful and innocent, and everyone loved her so—she seemed born for something better than living amongst persons who are always doing wrong. Do you remember, Amy, the day we went together to Stephen's cottage, when he talked so gravely, and said that she had an angel's face, and that it was fitter for heaven than for earth ? It gave me a pang to hear him ; and I have thought of it so often this afternoon.'

'I remember it quite well,' said Amy; 'and how grave you looked afterwards. But, Dora, would it not make you very happy to know that you never could do wrong any more?'

'Yes. And then Rose has never done any great harm as other people have, who are older; and, besides, she cannot look forward to anything.'

'That is what I feel sometimes,' said Amy. 'It seems as if there were so many things to be seen in the world, and so much pleasure to come when one is grown up. I can quite understand that old people do not care about dying, or persons like Miss Morton, who have nothing to make them happy; but I cannot feel like them.'

'Poor Emily!' sighed Dora; she will be more unhappy than any one.' And then, as if trying to shake off painful thoughts, she added, in a different tone, 'But, Amy, you must tell me at once what you wish to know about Julia Stanley, or I shall have no time left. I promised Margaret to go back to her for a few minutes.'

'It was nothing particular,' said Amy; 'only I wanted to hear what time they went away, and whether Mary Warner said anything more to Miss Cunningham.'

'Lucy and Margaret went out almost immediately after you were gone,' replied Dora; 'so they did not meet again; and I don't think it would have been of any use if they had, for there was nothing really to be said—Mary had done no harm; and I am sure Julia Stanley would have rendered matters ten times worse if an apology had been made in her presence. She tried to make Mary as angry and pert as herself, but it would not do; and at last she quite laughed at her, and called her a tame-spirited girl, who was not fit to go through the world; and then Hester took Miss Cunningham's part, and said that they neither of them knew how to behave, and she would appeal to me to support her; so you may imagine my walk was not very agreeable; and I was quite glad when we came back to find that the carriage had been ordered and they were to go directly. They all left messages for you, Amy, excepting Mary, who told me she had seen you. Julia was really kind, and begged me to say how glad she was about your papa's coming home, and that she wanted to have told you so herself; and Hester joined with her, but I don't think she really cared much.'

'And Mrs Danvers,' said Amy; 'when did she go?'

'Directly after breakfast; because she was afraid of the

children being out late. I wish, oh, how I wish she had stayed, for then Rose would not have been taken for a walk. They had all left us before one o'clock; and Mr Dornford prevailed on papa to let Frank return with him for a day or two.'

'I shall never think of any of them with much pleasure,' said Amy; 'though I enjoyed some things when they were here very much. I wonder whether they will ever stay with you again.'

'I don't know,' replied Dora. 'Mary Warner may, perhaps, because her home is not very far off; but Mr Stanley intends to live in London soon; so that unless we meet there, I suppose there is not much chance of their ever coming in our way again. But one thing more, Amy, I must tell you: I saw Mr Cunningham and Lucy before they set off. Lucy was very sulky, and would hardly speak; but Mr Cunningham was extremely kind; and I could see how much he felt for us all. He begged particularly to be remembered to you, and said he wished he could have said good-bye to you.'

'I think he is the kindest person I ever met with,' replied Amy; 'but still I am very glad he went away. And if I had seen Miss Cunningham, I cannot think what I should have done.'

'Perhaps her brother will not speak of you,' said Dora; 'but as it is, I don't think she is very fond of you. She looked more sulky than ever when your name was mentioned. And now I think I have given you the history of every one, so I had better go to poor Margaret.'

'Margaret will not like to see me, I am sure,' observed Amy. 'But I wish you could tell her how sorry I am,—I don't mean that you should give her a message; but only if, in talking to her, you could make her think me less unkind.'

'She does not know that you had anything to do with the affair,' replied Dora.

'But I would much rather she should know,' said Amy, looking vexed. 'I could never bear her to love me, and yet feel all the time that I had been deceiving her.'

'I will tell her, if you desire it: I did not like to do it before. But if I were in your place I could not keep such a thing back.'

'No,' answered Amy; 'I do not wish any one to love me when they do not know I have done things to vex them: it would seem as if I were taking what did not belong to me. But, Dora, perhaps you will say to Margaret, now that I wished her to know it myself, and that I am very, very sorry about it, and that I hope, with all my heart, she will forgive me.'

'She would never be angry with you if she felt as I do,' said Dora.

'Hark!' exclaimed Amy, interrupting her, 'is not that the hall door-bell?'

Dora ran into the gallery to listen, but came back with a disappointed countenance. 'It was not the bell,' she said; 'but I could see the groom who went with papa riding down the avenue. What can have made him return alone?'

Amy had scarcely time to answer before Dora was gone to make inquiries. They were not satisfactorily answered. Mr Harrington had not found Dr Bailey at home, but hearing that he was only absent on a visit to a patient, about a mile from his own house, he thought it better to follow him himself, and had sent the servant back with a little pencil note, explaining the reason of the further delay. The information, however, in some degree relieved Mrs Harrington's uneasiness, for a thousand vague fears had arisen in her mind; and notwithstanding her alarm for her child, she could now feel comparatively composed.

Rose also was again becoming more tranquil; and her mother began to cheer herself with the hope that even before Dr Bailey's arrival, there might be a considerable change for the better. But in this hope Emily Morton did not participate. Though equally anxious, she watched every symptom with far greater calmness; and, young as she was, had seen too much of illness not to perceive that the change which appeared to be taking place was likely to end fatally, unless Rose possessed a strength of constitution sufficient to enable her to bear up against the excessive weakness with which it was accompanied. The remedies that had already been tried had in a measure allayed the fever; but the poor little girl was evidently suffering from some internal injury; and her low moanings were as distressing to Emily now as her vehemence had been before.

The moments passed wearily by. Colonel Herbert and Amy walked up and down the avenue, although the evening had closed in, listening for the trampling of the horses' feet: Dora remained with her sister; and Mrs Herbert sat in the chamber of the sick child, forgetful of herself, as she tried to console those whose sorrow was greater than her own. Emily Morton was the first in the house to catch the distant sound; and immediately afterwards Amy's voice was heard at the door, whispering that her uncle and Dr Bailey were just arrived. Emily left the room, thinking that Mrs Harrington might prefer her being absent;

and while the physician was deciding upon a case on which it seemed that her own life depended, she paced the gallery quickly with Amy at her side, without uttering a single expression either of hope or fear, and endeavouring to bring her mind into a state of perfect submission to whatever it might be the will of God to appoint.

Much as Emily had loved Rose before, though she had been for months the very sunshine of her existence—the one bright gem which alone gave a charm to her daily life—she had never fully realised how much her happiness depended upon her till that moment; and when at length the door again opened, and Mr Harrington and the physician came into the gallery, all power of utterance seemed denied her, and unconsciously she caught Dr Bailey's arm, and looked in his face, with an expression of such fearful anxiety, that, accustomed as he was to scenes of suffering, it for the moment almost overcame him. But even before he had spoken Emily had learned the truth from Mr Harrington's countenance. She had never seen the same look of anguish before but on one occasion, when he stood by the death-bed of his eldest son. 'I know it,' she exclaimed, with the same unnatural hollowness of voice which had startled Amy before: 'you need not tell me; I felt there was no hope.'

'We will not say there is no hope,' replied Dr Bailey, kindly, yet gravely. 'She is so young that her strength may rally again.'

'It is better to know the worst at once,' said Mr Harrington. 'But can you indeed do nothing?'

'I fear not,' was the reply. 'There is apparently some internal mischief. But of course I will do everything that lies in my power; and I shall hope to return here very early in the morning, when I shall be better able to judge of the case from the effect of the medicines I have ordered.'

'Do you think she will know us again?' asked Emily, rousing herself from the first stupor of grief.

'It is probable she may,' replied Dr Bailey. 'The fever will most probably diminish; and the pain she is suffering may, I think, be soothed by opiates.'

'And is it quite impossible that you should remain with us to-night?' inquired Mr Harrington. 'I need not say that where the life of my child is at stake no sacrifice would be too great.'

'You must not talk of sacrifices,' replied Dr Bailey. 'No one could look at that sweet child without feeling that to be the

means of restoring her would be more than a sufficient recompense for the greatest exertions. If it were not that I have a still more urgent case requiring my presence, nothing would induce me to go. But I have no immediate fear for your poor little girl ; there is not likely to be any great change for several hours ; and you must remember she may rally after all.'

Whilst Dr Bailey was speaking, Amy had brought a chair for Miss Morton, and stood by her side, earnestly desiring to comfort her, yet not daring to do more than show it by her manner. It was a grief so deep that she could not venture to speak of it ; and her own tears fell fast, as she remembered what Rose had been, only a few hours before, and thought of the condition to which she was now reduced.

But a few more words passed between Mr Harrington and Dr Bailey ; and when they parted, there was a promise given, that, if possible, the latter should return to Emmerton by day-break. Mr Harrington was rather relieved by the idea, and hastened to his wife to give her the same comfort ; but he found her in a state which rendered her incapable of receiving it. Her expectations had been so sanguine before Dr Bailey's arrival, and she had hoped so much from the decrease of the fever, that the disappointment was doubly felt, and she now required almost as much attention as Rose. Cold as she generally appeared, her affection for her children was very great ; and Rose from her infancy had been her especial delight ; and now that she was called suddenly to part from her, at a time when she was still suffering from the loss of her eldest boy, her whole mind seemed to sink under the trial. Emily Morton's love, indeed, was not less ; but there was a principle to support her, of which Mrs Harrington knew but little ; for she felt only that Rose was dying, and her thoughts could not dwell with comfort upon the world in which she would live again. At this season of distress the blessing of Mrs Herbert's presence was particularly felt. The sight of so much sorrow made her insensible to all pain or fatigue ; she seemed to possess a power of thought and feeling for every one ; and her natural energy enabled her to decide at once upon what was best to be done.

Dr Bailey's orders for Rose were quickly attended to ; Mrs Harrington was conveyed to her own room almost insensible ; and a few words of kindness and sympathy were spoken to Emily, which gradually recalled the feeling of resignation to which her mind had been so long tutored, and restored her

power of action. Mr Harrington went himself to inform Dora and Margaret of Dr Bailey's opinion, and then stationed himself at the door of the sick chamber, that he might be informed of every change that took place ; whilst Amy, after doing her utmost to assist Mrs Herbert, went to her father, who was now left solitary and anxious in the room, which only the evening before had been filled with company, and resounding with music and merriment. The contrast was indeed strange ; and Amy, when thinking of it, could scarcely believe it possible that so much had happened in so short a space of time. It was her first lesson in the changes of life ; and it spoke even more plainly than her mother's warnings of the utter insufficiency of wealth to afford anything like real happiness. At that hour she felt how little comfort her uncle could derive from being possessed of the means of gratifying every passing fancy. He would have sacrificed all, without a thought, to have restored his child to health ; but his riches and his luxuries were powerless ; and the one only consolation now remaining was that blessing of prayer, which was equally the privilege of the poorest of his neighbours.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MARGARET'S feelings, upon being first told of Dr Bailey's opinion, were bitter beyond expression. She accused herself of having been the cause of all that had happened ; and declared that unless Rose recovered she should never again know a happy moment ; and then, as the burst of sorrow subsided, she endeavoured to find some excuse for her own conduct in that of Miss Cunningham, appealing to Dora to determine whether, if it had not been for her, she should have been induced to leave Rose by herself. Dora tried to console her ; but she could not help remembering what Colonel Herbert had said ; for she saw that Margaret had no idea how faulty her conduct had been with regard to Miss Morton ; so entirely, indeed, had it passed from her mind, that even when told of what Amy had thought it right to do, she took but little notice, merely saying that she had always thought Amy loved to meddle with everything, and then renewing her self-reproach and her complaints of

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Miss Cunningham. For some time she could not be persuaded to leave her room ; but, as the hours wore away, she became more tranquil, and at last consented to go to her little sister, though it was with a shrinking reluctance, which proved how much she dreaded to look upon the change of which she had been partly the cause. The effect, however, was at first less painful than might have been expected. The medicines which had been administered had in a great degree lulled the pain, and Rose was now lying in a state of torpor. Margaret gazed on her for some moments in silence, but without any great apparent distress, until Rose opened her eyes and looked up in her face with perfect unconsciousness ; and then her cheek turned pale, and her lip quivered, and, unable to bear the sight, she turned hastily away, and again shut herself up in her own room.

Several hours passed after Dr Bailey's departure, and Rose still continued so quiet, that a faint hope was felt even by Emily Morton that her strength of constitution would enable her to rally from the shock she had received. Mrs Herbert also fancied that she perceived some signs of returning intelligence, and went herself to Mr Harrington to cheer him with the favourable account, and to ask whether he thought it would be expedient to communicate it to Mrs Harrington ; but the amendment was so trifling, that he feared the consequences of a second disappointment. She was therefore only told that Rose was more tranquil, and that everything had been done which Dr Bailey advised ; and Mrs Herbert urged the necessity of her taking some rest, if she wished to be of any service in attending upon her child on the following day. At first she strenuously resisted, but her husband's entreaties at length prevailed ; and, after some consultation, it was decided that Morris and Emily Morton should watch till the morning, and that Mrs Harrington should have the earliest intelligence if any change took place for the worse. Mr Harrington went to his room, but not to rest, still less to sleep. There were none, indeed, in the house who could obtain more than a few moments of forgetfulness. The slightest sound was listened for with anxiety ; but through the greater part of the night all remained still, and nothing but the light which gleamed from the sick chamber would have indicated that any thing unusual had occurred. During this time there was no change to excite either hope or fear ; and Emily, as she observed the perfect repose in which Rose was lying, almost hoped that

she slept. The painful expression of a wandering mind had passed away, and but for the irregular breathing and the altered complexion, she could have imagined that her anxiety was a delusion. And yet the thought that Rose might recover did not bring with it entire happiness. In those silent hours of watching, Emily's mind had recovered its usual tone, and she had forced herself to look with steadiness upon the loss she dreaded. For herself, it would be the severing of her dearest earthly tie ; but for Rose, it would be an escape from all the dangers of the world to the enjoyment of rest and peace for ever ; and as she recurred to the bitter trials of her own life, and the sins and infirmities with which it had been crowded, she felt that to wish that one as yet so innocent should be spared to struggle with the same temptations would be merely a selfish regard to her own feelings, without any reference to considerations of far higher importance.

What Rose might be in after-life no one could dare to say. When she grew up Emily must leave Emmerton ; and, though she could trust and hope that God would guard her through the difficulties of life, she could not but tremble for her. To lose her now, would be to feel that she was gone to happiness ; to lose her then, might be to dread lest she should have forgotten the promise of her baptism, and departed from the path of holiness in which she had so earnestly endeavoured to lead her. The very possibility was fearful ; and as it flashed upon her mind, Emily went to the window to relieve herself from the oppressive gloom of a sick chamber, by looking upon the heavenly beauty of a cloudless night. All was perfectly still ; the long shadows of the trees were motionless upon the lawn, and not even a leaf was stirred by the night breeze. The earth seemed to be at rest ; but Emily well knew that the peace of that hour would quickly pass away, and that the morning might bring with it rain and storms to deface all that now appeared so fair. It was not upon the beauty of this world that her heart could dwell with comfort at such a moment ; but she could look upon the bright stars which glittered above her head, and rejoice to think that there were homes where sorrow had never entered ; and then she prayed, not that Rose might be restored to her, but that God would guard her whether in life or death, and grant to herself a perfect submission to His will.

Emily was still standing at the window when a slight sound startled her. She fancied that Rose had spoken ; but Morris.

who was at the further end of the room, had not noticed it. Again, however, her name was repeated distinctly ; and when she went to the bed-side, she saw by the light of the lamp, that Rose had opened her eyes, and was gazing around, apparently bewildered with the new situation in which she found herself. At the first instant, Emily's heart bounded with joy, but another glance made it sink in despair. Rose had recovered her senses ; but a change had passed over her countenance, which told that her hours were numbered. It was an expression that Emily had too often watched to be deceived ; and anxiously beckoning to Morris, she determined upon sending immediately to Mr Harrington. Morris, however, was leaving the room, and did not observe her ; and afraid of startling Mrs Harrington by ringing the bell, she thought it best to wait a few minutes for her return, and endeavour in the meantime to soothe and tranquillise the suffering child. 'I am near you,' she said, softly. 'You know, my darling, that I never leave you.'

'I thought you were gone,' said Rose. 'Why do you let me stay here?'

'Because it is better for you to be here than in any other place. You will not care if I am with you.'

'It is all strange,' said Rose. 'When will you take me away?'

'If you are better, you may go by and by,' answered Emily, hardly able to articulate the words ; 'but you are too ill now.'

Rose tried to lift her little hand to her head, but she had not strength for the effort. 'It pains me so,' she said.

'But it is God who sends you the pain,' replied Emily ; 'and He loves you so much, you will try and bear it.'

'Will He make me die?' asked Rose, fixing her dark eyes earnestly upon Emily's face.

'For a moment Emily could not answer ; and then, recovering herself, she said, 'If God should make you die, my darling, He will take you to heaven ; and you will live with Him, and with Jesus Christ, and the holy angels. You will not be afraid?'

'Must I go alone?' continued Rose. 'You always said you would be with me everywhere.'

'It is not God's will,' replied Emily. 'I must not go with you now, but I will pray that I may follow you by and by. And He will watch over you, and love you much more than I can ; and you will be so happy, so very happy, you will never wish to return back again.'

‘Then you will come soon, and mamma, and papa, and all,’ murmured Rose, whilst her head sank, and her eyes closed.

Emily, in alarm, was about to ring the bell, when she again opened them. ‘Don’t go,’ she said, feebly clasping Emily’s hand. ‘It is all dark. Why will not mamma come?’

‘She will be here directly, I hope,’ replied Emily. ‘But it is not really dark; and God is near, and the angels, though you cannot see them.’

A second time Rose closed her eyes, and appeared to be repeating something to herself. Emily gently withdrew her hand, and going to the other side of the room, she rang to summon Morris. Rose looked at her as she stood again by her side, but scarcely seemed to know her, till Emily placed her hand on hers; and then, with an effort, she said, ‘Am I naughty? Indeed I cannot remember ...’

‘Remember what?’ asked Emily, anxiously endeavouring to catch the reply.

‘Say it, say it,’ murmured the dying child.

Emily bent still closer, and heard the words—‘Our Father, which art in heaven,’ though they were so faint as hardly to be intelligible. ‘I will say it for you,’ she replied, summoning all her self-command to subdue the agony of her feelings; and, kneeling down, she repeated, calmly and distinctly, the holy prayer which Rose had been taught in her earliest infancy, and which was now recurring to her mind, to bless and soothe her death-bed.

Whilst Emily was yet speaking, Mrs Harrington, followed by her husband, who had been alarmed at the sound of the bell, entered the room; but Rose did not appear to notice them. A momentary strength had been granted her, and with a clear though feeble voice, she followed the prayer to the end; and then, stretching out her little hand, she said, ‘Mamma, it is bright now. They are come to take me.’ And with a faint smile, as she half repeated Emily’s name, her head once more sank upon the pillow, and the innocent spirit was at rest.

CHAPTER XXX.

IT was happy for Emily Morton that the attention which Mrs Harrington's situation demanded, when the fact of her loss forced itself upon her mind, obliged her in some degree to forget the misery of her own feelings. So much was required to be done, that she had no time to realise the vast blank which that one moment had made in her existence ; and her chief anxiety now was to prevent Mrs Herbert from being disturbed. This, however, was impossible. She had not, indeed, heard the bell ; but she soon learned all that had happened, and went directly to Mrs Harrington's room to entreat that Emily would allow her to take her place, and at least lie down for a few hours herself, even if sleep were, as she feared, out of the question. But Emily's only support was in exertion. To have been left alone in her own chamber, with everything around to remind her of the treasure which had been taken from her, would have been a trial so great that she could not suffer herself to dwell upon it. 'I must stay,' she said ; 'it is all I can do ; and I do not need rest.'

Mrs Herbert looked at her anxiously. 'You do not know what you need just now, my dear ; but perhaps you are right ; only,' she added, as she kissed Emily's burning forehead, and observed the trembling of her limbs, 'I have felt lately almost as if you were my eldest child ; and you must allow me a mother's authority.'

Emily could not answer ; but Mrs Herbert's affection, even in that hour of bitterness, relieved the oppressive sense of desolation which had before weighed her spirit to the earth ; and when again left to herself, she was able to dwell with greater composure upon the scene through which she had just passed, and felt truly thankful that her prayers had been heard, and that strength had been given her to support it.

The morning had dawned before Mrs Harrington was sufficiently recovered to allow of her being left ; and while Emily was still lingering, unable to summon resolution to go to her own room, a gentle knock was heard at the door, and Amy's voice asked permission to enter. 'Mamma sent me,' she said, as calmly as her agitation would allow. 'She wishes you so much to go to bed ; and we have been getting my room ready for you, that you may be near us, if you want anything. I am to be in

mamma's sitting-room, so that no one shall go to you unless you like it.'

'You had better go,' observed Mrs Harrington, faintly; 'you must require rest more than any one. Pray do not stay with me.'

Emily hesitated. She thought that, if the effort she dreaded were made at once, the most painful trial would be over. But Amy's pleading look could not be resisted. 'It has been my only comfort the last half hour,' she continued, 'to try and make all nice for you; and poor Dora has been helping me; and Margaret sent her love to you, only she cannot bear to see any one.'

'You must go,' insisted Mrs Harrington. 'If Morris is left with me, I shall not require any one else.' And Emily did not wait any longer, for she was beginning to suffer from the effects of all she had undergone.

The room had been so prepared by Amy's thoughtfulness, that it almost looked as if Emily had inhabited it for weeks; and little as she then cared for personal comfort, she yet felt unspeakably relieved by these tokens of affection; for a child's love had lately been so associated with every thought and feeling, that without it there was an aching void in her heart which nothing else could fill.

Her rest, if such it could be called, was short and broken; but in her half-waking intervals, Amy's face came before her with its expression of peaceful innocence, as if to remind her that something was still left in the world to which her affections might cling: and when she arose to the full consciousness of sorrow, her first comfort was the thought that it was God who had ordained her trial, and the second that He had remembered her in her distress, by giving her such friends as she felt Mrs Herbert and Amy to be.

The day passed slowly on, but Emily had neither the power nor the inclination to leave her chamber. She was completely exhausted by the night's fatigue; and Mrs Herbert entreated her on no account to make any exertion, till her strength had been in some degree recruited. There was not much indeed required, for Mrs Harrington had been considerably refreshed by a few hours of sleep, but her spirit was entirely crushed by the blow. She seldom spoke, or paid any attention to what was going on, but sat gazing upon vacancy, or walking up and down the room, unmindful of every effort that was made to rouse her. It was now that Dora's energy and principle were fully called into action. The selfishness which she had sometimes previously

shown had been the result rather of education than disposition ; and she had lately struggled so much against it, that, at a time when every feeling of sympathy and affection was awakened, it seemed entirely to disappear. She attended upon her mother, and talked to her father, and comforted Margaret, without apparently once consulting her own wishes, though there were moments when the recollection of Rose, or the sight of some book or plaything which had belonged to her, brought such a pang to her heart, that she longed to rush away and give vent to the misery of her feelings alone.

Mrs Herbert would probably have suffered much from her exertions if it had not been for Dora's assistance ; but she was able in consequence to spend the afternoon in her own room ; and however she might sympathise in the grief of her brother and his family, there was a happiness in the knowledge that her husband was near, which nothing could entirely destroy. Her chief anxiety was for Emily Morton. She knew that the first bitterness of sorrow would in time be diminished, and that even Mrs Harrington would probably soon recover from its present overpowering effects ; but to Emily the change it would cause must be lasting. There was but little prospect of her continuing at Emmerton, now that her principal occupation was taken from her ; and Mrs Herbert shrunk from the thought of her being sent again amongst strangers, to meet, perhaps, with still greater scorn and neglect than she had yet experienced. She had no home and but few friends, and might, therefore, be compelled to go immediately into another situation, with the recollection of little Rose weighing upon her spirit, and adding tenfold bitterness to the trials she would probably be called on to encounter.

Mrs Herbert was thinking upon this subject, and endeavouring to form some plan for Emily's comfort, when her husband entered. He had been talking with Mr Harrington, and had left him, he hoped, more tranquil and resigned.

'I am not so much afraid for him,' said Mrs Herbert, 'as for my sister. A person of her disposition can seldom entirely recover from a sudden shock of this nature.'

'Perhaps,' he replied, 'it may not be intended that she should. One hardly likes to think of the reason for which afflictions are sent to others, because one may judge so wrongly ; yet a deep, quiet, lasting grief will sometimes, I am sure, win back our hearts to God when everything else has failed.'

'Poor Charlotte !' said Mrs Herbert ; 'it is a bitter discipline.

And I never see other people suffer without thinking that I may require it next myself.'

'Have you seen Miss Morton lately?' asked Colonel Herbert. 'I am afraid the change this will bring upon her will be greater than upon any one, as far as outward circumstances go.'

'Amy has been keeping watch upon her all day, and told me just now she thought that she was trying to sleep again, so I did not like to disturb her; and indeed I have only seen her twice since the morning, and then only for a few minutes, for I saw she required rest and solitude more than anything else.'

'She will scarcely remain here now,' said Colonel Herbert. 'Her chief employment and interest will be gone. And I suppose she would not be happy even if Mrs Harrington wished her to continue.'

'Charlotte will not wish it. She told me a short time since that her principal reason for desiring to keep Miss Morton was on account of little Rose, as Dora and Margaret did not like having her in the house, and she felt herself that the position was an awkward one. She did not choose her to be a companion; and she was not old enough to have any authority.'

'And what will become of her?' said Colonel Herbert.

'She will go into another situation as soon as possible; but the difficulty will be to find one that will suit her.'

'It will be a miserable life for her, I fear,' he continued. 'Some people seem born to struggle against the hardships of the world; but she is so very gentle that it appears as if the smallest unkindness would completely crush her.'

'You do not know her,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'She can never be crushed by anything, not even by the grief which she is now enduring. Her principles are far too high.'

Colonel Herbert paced the room thoughtfully for several minutes; and then, suddenly stopping, he said, 'Amy is very fond of Miss Morton, I think.'

'Yes; and the acquaintance has been of infinite service already. Amy is very quick at discerning character, and notices everything; and I can constantly see how the example of Miss Morton's patience and goodness has strengthened her own right feelings. I quite dread to think of what she will suffer when they are compelled to part.'

'Are you quite sure that parting is necessary?' said Colonel Herbert.

'Only as you are quite sure yourself. Miss Morton will not

wish to stay, and my sister will not wish to keep her ; and of course in such a case she must go.'

'Supposing—remember I am not expressing any wish upon the subject—but supposing it were suggested to Miss Morton to return with us to the cottage, and take your place as Amy's governess, would it meet your wishes ; and do you think she would like it ?'

'Would you really agree to such a plan ?' exclaimed Mrs Herbert. 'It crossed my own mind once, but I thought it would not please you ; and I could not bear to propose anything which it might give you pain to refuse.'

'Why should you imagine it would not please me ?'

'Because it might interfere with your notions of domestic comfort to have a stranger in the house. And then you cannot feel for Miss Morton as I do.'

'But I can feel for her because you do. And with regard to my notions of domestic comfort, I should consider them of very minor importance, even if Miss Morton were not a person to excite such deep interest, when compared with the advantage her assistance would be to you in Amy's education, and the pleasure it would be to Amy to have such a companion. The first thing that gave me the idea, was the knowledge that you required more relaxation than you were likely to give yourself, if you considered that Amy's instruction depended entirely on your own energy.'

'I do not think we should repent taking such a step,' said Mrs Herbert. 'My own feeling for Emily is so sincere that I would make great sacrifices for her comfort if they did not involve yours.'

'I do not see why they should ; though, even if they did, I hope I should not hesitate. By arranging for Miss Morton to return with us, we may be the means of giving her peace, and even happiness, for several years at least. But in fact I do not feel that it would be any sacrifice now that I know you would like it.'

'It would be a very great relief to my mind,' said Mrs Herbert. 'If you had seen her look of misery last night, you would have felt that it was impossible to rest satisfied till something had been done for her.'

'It will not do to decide upon it hastily, though,' observed Colonel Herbert. 'Situated as we are, having known her family, and having a personal interest in herself, whatever we decided on doing we should be obliged to continue,—I mean that we

could not allow her to leave us merely on the ground of its not suiting our convenience that she should remain. It would be cruel, after giving her the idea that we are really her friends, to throw her again upon the mercy of strangers.'

'Still,' said Mrs Herbert, 'I am not really inclined to hesitate ; my feelings are decidedly in favour of the plan ; though for that very reason I should wish to consider all the possible objections in their strongest light.'

'There will be no occasion to decide at once,' said Colonel Herbert. 'Miss Morton will scarcely be in a state to think of anything for the next few days ; and by that time we shall be better able to judge whether there is any serious obstacle in the way—anything that involves a sacrifice of what is right, which, in fact, is all that is really to be considered.'

'People would laugh,' said Mrs Herbert, 'at the idea of its being possible to act wrongly in taking an orphan girl into your family, with the earnest wish of making her happy.'

'Very likely they would ; but I have seen enough of life to have discovered that a hasty kindness is often quite as injurious as a hasty unkindness. Mere feeling, however good, should never be allowed entirely to guide our actions, especially where the happiness of another person is so materially concerned as in the present case.'

'I do not well see how it could lead us wrong now,' replied Mrs Herbert.

'It might induce us to decide without considering the sacrifices which will be required of us ; and then when the time came for making them we should be vexed and disappointed, and should probably show it, and so destroy poor Miss Morton's comfort, or perhaps force her to leave us, whereas, if we well weigh them beforehand, we shall be prepared, and they will come as a matter of course.'

'I believe you are right ; and yet my first impulse, when you mentioned the subject, was to go at once and name it to Emily ; of course, I felt in a moment it would be very absurd, if not really wrong ; but it is so hard to know that suffering exists, and not make some effort to relieve it.'

'Yes,' replied Colonel Herbert ; 'and it is so hard to make up our minds that suffering is good for those we love. But we must do it now ; we must bear to wait patiently till Miss Morton has formed her own plans, though we know how much it will cost her to do it, and also to see every one about us unhappy for many

weeks, if not months, to come ; no human power can at present give them consolation.'

'It is but a sad welcome for you,' said Mrs Herbert, smiling through her tears as she looked in her husband's face ; 'but I can be deeply thankful that the trial did not come sooner ; I could not have borne it then.'

'We might have been too happy without it,' he replied. 'I half dreaded that something might happen when I went with Amy to the cottage. To see you looking as you did on that morning, so much more like your former self than I could possibly have expected, and to discover in every word she uttered how entirely my fondest wishes for her had been realised, was greater happiness than it is usually permitted us to enjoy for any length of time.'

'It is strange now,' said Mrs Herbert, 'to remember the unclouded pleasure I then felt ; it is like endeavouring to realise the beauty of a summer's day when we are in the midst of winter. But there are some who seem to have had no summer to their lives—Miss Morton, for instance.'

'Her summer may be to come, even on earth,' replied Colonel Herbert ; 'at least, if it should be arranged for her to be with us, I think we shall agree in striving that it may be so ; and if it should be otherwise ordered, she is hardly a person to grieve for the few wintry hours of this life, when she can look forward to the long summer's day beyond it.'

'It would be a great blessing,' said Mrs Herbert, 'to feel that we had been the means of giving her comfort and relief ; yet I fully see the necessity of considering the subject well. And one thing we must be careful about is the manner in which it is first mentioned to my brother and Charlotte. They would not be likely to object, and yet they might be annoyed if Emily proposed herself to leave them, and then came to us immediately afterwards.'

'Perhaps it would be best,' observed Colonel Herbert, 'to find out their ideas first, and, if they are what we fancy, to suggest our wishes, and gain their approbation before it is named to Miss Morton.'

'Always remembering that we well weigh all the difficulties,' said Mrs Herbert. 'I see your mind runs on just as fast as mine ; you speak as if you had no doubt what your decision would be.'

'Perhaps I have not ; however, it is as well to be reminded of

prudence ; so, for the next day or two, we will forget that we have any inclinations, and look only to the objections.'

The entrance of Amy interrupted the conversation, which was not again renewed till the evening ; and by that time Mrs Herbert's feelings were still more interested in carrying the plan into execution. She had spent nearly an hour with Miss Morton, and had found her more composed than she could have imagined possible ; but it was evident, from many little expressions, that Emily fully contemplated the necessity of her removal. She spoke much of Mrs Herbert's kindness, and said that the remembrance of it would be carried with her as one of her greatest consolations, wherever it might please God to place her ; and with timid hesitation she asked whether Amy might be allowed at times to write to her. 'Perhaps,' she said, 'your slight knowledge of me scarcely warrants my making the request ; but it is hard to part so suddenly from all that has given pleasure to life ; and my heart will still cling to Emmerton, and to those who have rendered it so dear to me, even in a few short months.'

Mrs Herbert longed to say that she trusted the parting might be unnecessary ; but she contented herself with assuring Emily that Amy should write to her frequently, if they were separated, and expressing a general hope that she might always remain in the neighbourhood.

'I am afraid,' replied Emily, 'that it would hardly be for my good. I feel now as if to linger so near, to be so constantly reminded of lost blessings, would unfit me for the duties of life. I must act ; and perhaps the greater my difficulties and my loneliness, the better it may be for me in the end. Even now I have forced myself to consider and decide upon the future, because I know that to sit alone and dwell upon the past would destroy all my powers of exertion.'

'But to see us occasionally,' said Mrs Herbert, 'would surely be a comfort to you.'

'In time it would,' replied Emily, 'but not now. To be within reach of you, and yet to be separated, as I must be by circumstances, would probably make me repine even more than I fear I am inclined to do at present. And I am trying,' she added, while her pale lips quivered, and the tears rushed to her eyes, 'to learn the lesson which it is the will of God to teach me. I know how quickly my heart will fix itself upon earthly objects.'

'But you must not think, my dear,' replied Mrs Herbert,

'that it is God's will that we should live without affection. Why should He have bestowed such feelings upon us if they were not intended to be exercised? If we give the first place to Him, He will never forbid us to give the second to our fellow-creatures.'

'I am afraid,' said Emily, faintly. 'I have thought before that I could give up all for Him, and yet when He required it I have shrunk from the sacrifice; and so it is now. I am not resigned as I ought to be; and I must never again put myself within reach of the temptation of loving an earthly being too well.'

'You are speaking, my love, under the influence of an overstrained feeling,' answered Mrs Herbert. 'I know you would not change what has happened if the power were granted you at this instant; you would not bring back that sweet child to the sufferings of a sinful world, even if it were to give yourself years of happiness.'

'No, no!' exclaimed Emily, eagerly. 'I can and I do thank God that she is safe with Him—not in words only, but from the very bottom of my heart; and yet I may be afraid—it has always been so. Those whom I have loved the best have ever been taken from me the first.'

'Only we may not presume to decide why,' said Mrs Herbert. 'It may have been for their good, quite as much as for your warning. And even now, if the loss of a darling child should be the means of bringing those whose happiness was wrapped up in her nearer to God, you would be the first to acknowledge the greatness of the blessing, and to see that the object of the trial might be principally their benefit. I do not mean to say,' she added, observing that Emily continued silent, 'that we are not all in danger of allowing our hearts to rest upon our earthly treasures; I am sure, indeed, it is one of our greatest temptations; but still we must not always think we have done so when they are taken from us; and, especially, we must not shut ourselves up in silent misery, and refuse the alleviations which God mercifully grants us.'

'Perhaps,' said Emily, 'I could be more resigned, if I did not at times fancy that I had been the cause of everything. If I had never left her, many moments of self-reproach would be spared me. Not that I give way to the idea, because I believe it is false: I was doing what I knew to be my duty in going to the cottage; and the event was in the hands of God: but yet the notion haunts

me ; and even when I turn away from it, it still remains a load on my heart.'

'And it will remain there, my dear, till the first misery of your feelings has worn off, and you can see things in a truer light. It is impossible to argue against it ; or rather, no arguments which any person can use will entirely satisfy you ; but you must, indeed, force yourself to turn away from it, or it will grow into a certainty, and then the whole energy of your mind will be destroyed. If we once allow ourselves to dwell too much upon the consequences even of our slightest actions, we shall be quite unfitted for the duties of life.'

'Then you do not think I was wrong ?' said Emily.

'No, indeed, I do not. You went on an errand of kindness, where your services were really required, and you left that dear child, as you believed, in a place of safety with those who were certainly quite old enough to have taken care of her during the few minutes of your absence. Consider what your feelings would have been if you had neglected to go to the cottage, and fatal consequences had been the result. You might have reproached yourself then, perhaps justly ; but you can have no cause for it now. If any one has reason to be distressed, it is poor Margaret ; and I am afraid she is suffering very much.'

'Have you seen her ?' asked Emily.

'No,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'but Dora tells me she cannot comfort her at all. I have sent several messages, and hope, by and by, she will let me go to her.'

'Will you say something from me,' said Emily ; 'I hardly know what ; but only let her feel that I think of her.'

'I wish it were possible to convince her how wrongly she has acted towards you,' answered Mrs Herbert. 'I fear that what she is suffering now will have but little real influence on her character. It is mere feeling, and will pass away ; for she will soon discover that she has exaggerated her negligence, and then she will care but little about it.'

'I am very sorry for her,' said Emily ; 'and I could not bear to think that she was made more miserable now on my account.'

'But it would be for her good, my dear ; and if I attempt to comfort her by proving that she has over-estimated one fault, I shall certainly endeavour to make her sorry for having thought so little of the other. It will be useless to attempt it by and by ; but now Dora says she really feels for you, and therefore there may be some hope.'

‘You must not let her think that I remember it,’ replied Emily. ‘I wish she could know how entirely I have forgiven it.’

‘I am not sure that I do wish it just now,’ replied Mrs Herbert. ‘To be forgiven before we have acknowledged our offences makes us think too lightly of them. When Margaret can see how utterly selfish her conduct was, and grieve heartily for it, although no evil consequences have followed, then it will be time to talk of forgiveness. And now, my dear, I must leave you ; but Amy shall come to you whenever you wish it.’

‘Shall I ever thank you enough ?’ said Emily.

‘Do not talk of thanks,’ interrupted Mrs Herbert ; ‘or, if you will, you must listen to all I have to say of your kindness to Amy.’

The substance of this conversation was repeated to Colonel Herbert in the evening : and as there was now no doubt of Miss Morton’s intentions, the only thing that required to be decided was the practicability of her residence at the cottage. Colonel Herbert insisted strongly upon every objection, feeling in his own mind how much his inclinations led him the contrary way ; and having been the first to propose the plan, he was the more anxious that Mrs Herbert should not afterwards see cause to repent it. The expense, the responsibility, the interruption to their own privacy, were all brought forward ; but Mrs Herbert overruled everything ; and after an hour’s earnest conversation, it was finally determined that the subject should be named to Mr and Mrs Harrington as soon as they had heard of Emily’s intentions. ‘And then,’ said Colonel Herbert, with a smile of heartfelt pleasure, ‘if Miss Morton will consent, we will see whether the quiet of the cottage, with you for a companion, and Amy for a pupil, will not in some degree restore her to happiness.’

‘If it should please God to grant it,’ replied Mrs Herbert, ‘I believe it will be through Amy’s means. I can see, even now, how she turns to her for comfort. She half-smiled this afternoon when Amy came into the room, and then checked herself, as if afraid to allow her thoughts to dwell upon her.’

‘Who would not find comfort in Amy ?’ said Colonel Herbert. ‘I have often tried to fancy what she would be like ; but I could not have expected to find her so entirely simple and sincere, with a mind in many respects so far beyond her age.’

‘It has been a great relief to me to observe how little she has been altered by the change of her life since she has been so much

with her cousins,' answered Mrs Herbert. 'It was my principal fear at first; but she has had a much greater influence upon them than they have had upon her.'

'I suspect,' replied her husband, 'that we are not at all aware of the real strength of principle in the mind of a child who has always endeavoured to do right. Children injure themselves for their whole lives by indulging in what are called trifling faults—a little vanity, or a little selfishness, or a hastiness of temper. If they could only be made to see the infinite importance of subduing these feelings early, they would grow up with confirmed habits of goodness, which, by the blessing of God, would never leave them, however they might be tempted in after-life.'

'We will hope that it may be so with Amy,' said Mrs Herbert. 'Certainly she has begun betimes; and I think she will lead her cousins to follow her example.'

'Dora interests me very much,' observed Colonel Herbert; 'but Margaret I have scarcely spoken to. Have you seen her lately?'

'No; but she promises to let me go to her the first thing to-morrow. She dreads seeing her mother; and I rather think she will be glad to have me to intercede for her.'

'She need not be afraid; while Mrs Harrington remains in her present state, she will not be likely to notice anything.'

'To-morrow,' said Mrs Herbert, 'I shall endeavour to persuade my sister to go and look once more upon that darling child. It will be a great trial, but I think it may rouse her; and her countenance is now so exquisitely peaceful and beautiful, that I should hope it might go far towards reconciling her to her loss.'

'The worst trial is yet to come, I fear,' said Colonel Herbert. 'There is something still to rest upon whilst the outward form is left us, even when the spirit is fled.'

'I do not think that I quite agree with you. When everything is gone that belonged to this world, we are able to feel more truly that the spirit may still be with us. Perhaps the separation between ourselves and little Rose may be far slighter than we accustom ourselves to imagine.'

'It may be so,' said Colonel Herbert, thoughtfully, 'though the Bible does not give us any certainty upon the subject.'

'It does not forbid us to think so; and at times it has been an inexpressible comfort to me to feel that those whom I have

loved might still be near, though I could not see them ; and I have always felt it more after they were taken from my sight, and I could no longer look upon them with the intense longing that they might return to be what they once were.'

'Whether true or not, the idea is an innocent one,' said Colonel Herbert ; 'I wish sincerely that it could be a comfort to your poor sister.'

'I think it not impossible,' said Mrs Herbert, 'that by and by Charlotte will consent to see Mr Walton. You know he has been acquainted with her from her childhood ; and I am sure she has a very great respect for him ; and, as a clergyman, he could say so many things which no one else would.'

'I rather doubt it,' replied her husband. 'She is so little accustomed to be unreserved, according to your account, that I can hardly imagine she would allow any one to speak plainly, much less to comfort her.'

'A month ago the case would have been very different,' said Mrs Herbert ; 'but this grief, I trust and believe, will have a very great effect. Even Edward's death was not felt as much ; at least it did not appear so when she first arrived. I am not, however, going to talk to you any longer, for I promised Amy, before she went to bed, that I would go to Miss Morton, the last thing, to see that she was comfortable.'

'Amy seemed worn out when she wished me good-night,' said Colonel Herbert ; 'her pale looks made me quite anxious.'

'She has had a very trying day ; and then, real sorrow is so new to her, and she has been endeavouring so much to comfort every one, and suffering so much at times herself (for she was very fond of little Rose), that it is not strange she should look pale.'

'I must go and see if she is asleep,' said Colonel Herbert, as he stole softly into the adjoining room.

Mrs Herbert followed, though almost inclined to find fault with him for running the risk of awakening her.

But Amy's repose was too deep to be disturbed even by her father's kiss. There was a tear on her cheek, which showed what her last thought had been ; but sleep had restored the peacefulness of an innocent mind ; and Colonel Herbert, as he looked at her with delight, prayed that it might never forsake her.

Mrs Herbert's conversation with Margaret, the following day, was more satisfactory than she had anticipated. At first, indeed, Margaret refused to listen to any consolation. She declared

that she had been the sole cause of the accident; that her mother must consider her so; and that it would be impossible ever again to know a happy moment. But when her aunt, although fully allowing her negligence and selfishness, pointed out how many other circumstances had combined to bring about the event, without which her fault, however great, would probably have produced no important consequences to any one but herself, Margaret became calmer; and Mrs Herbert's fear then was, lest she should consider herself perfectly free from blame. 'I do not mean, my dear,' she said, 'that you have no reason to reproach yourself, for selfishness and neglect must always be serious offences in the eye of God; but what I wish you to feel is, that if you have acted in the same manner on other occasions, you have been equally guilty in His sight, though no one may have known it but yourself.'

'Every one is selfish,' said Margaret; 'I never thought it was very wicked before.'

'Every one is selfish, naturally,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'but we are sent into the world to conquer our nature; and many persons are enabled to do it almost entirely. You will not call Miss Morton selfish?'

'No,' said Margaret, 'I don't think she is; but she has been so unhappy always, that I can never fancy she has had the same inclinations as other people—I mean that she does not care for things in the same way; and so it is not much trouble to her to give them up.'

'Yes,' observed Mrs Herbert, 'she has had a great deal of suffering in her short life; and I doubt whether any trial has been greater than the present.'

'I was afraid she would be very miserable,' said Margaret. 'Dora has told me how ill she looks; and I am sorry for her.'

There was a slight hesitation in Margaret's manner, as if she wished to escape from the subject; but Mrs Herbert was not inclined to permit it to drop. 'I am sure you feel for her now, my dear,' she said; 'but you could hardly have done so when you would have allowed her to be sent away under a false impression, and at a time when, of all others, it must have been most distressing.'

The colour rushed to Margaret's cheek, but she answered quickly, 'I did not know what would happen then; and, besides, she did not go.'

'But for what reason?' inquired Mrs Herbert; 'not because

you spoke for her willingly. If you had known how much she suffered for a whole hour, whilst obliged to make preparations, and fully believing that she must go, I think you would be sorry for your conduct. She thought then, what we know now would have been the case, that she never would see little Rose again.'

'Was she really so miserable?' said Margaret. 'Indeed I did not intend to make her so; and I should never have concealed anything if it had not been for Lucy Cunningham.'

'Miss Cunningham will, I hope, one day see how great her fault was; but, my dear Margaret, her actions cannot alter yours. God will not admit it as an excuse, that others have led us into evil; for we must each be judged for ourselves.'

'Does Emily Morton think much about it now?' said Margaret.

'No,' replied her aunt; 'she is so far from feeling anything like unkindness, that I am certain she would make any sacrifice to do you good and make you happy. But, my dear child, why will you always turn your mind to what other people think and feel? It can make no difference to you.'

'I don't know,' replied Margaret; 'but it always seems that things are worse when they are thought much of.'

'But why?' continued Mrs Herbert. 'It does not alter our conduct in the eye of God. We may think of it now, and it may appear to us of consequence; but you know, my love, that there must come a time when it will be of no use to us to have borne a good character in the world, or even to have been loved and admired by our friends, unless we have been also really good in our own hearts.'

Margaret turned rather pale, but made no reply; and Mrs Herbert went on. 'We do not know how soon the moment may arrive,' she said; 'and God sends us such warnings as we have had now to remind us of it. It is a great mercy that we may look upon that dear child, and feel perfectly happy in the belief that she is now safe, and in the keeping of her Saviour; but it might have been very different if the summons had been sent to any of us who are older.'

'But,' said Margaret, 'I fancied it was only grown-up people who could be so very wicked. I am only thirteen, and I have never been confirmed.'

'But you have been baptized,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'Before you could even know the difference between good and evil, God gave you His Holy Spirit to guide you in the right way; and

then He placed you in a happy home, with kind parents, and you were taught to read, and taken to church, and kept out of the reach of the temptations of the world. Why should it be less wicked to do wrong when we are young, and have so many blessings and so much instruction, than when we are old and exposed to every kind of evil?’

‘My faults are only little ones,’ said Margaret.

‘Your faults are the greatest you can commit, my love ; because you have been so educated that you would be ashamed to be guilty of greater ones ; and we may be quite sure, that whoever wilfully indulges in a trifling fault when not tempted to do anything worse, would equally indulge a greater one if the inducement were to be put before him. If, situated as you are, you will not struggle against vanity, or selfishness, or deceit, or ill-temper, you would not struggle against theft or falsehood if you were the child of a poor man.’

‘But I cannot really be so wicked,’ said Margaret.

‘Yes, indeed you can,’ replied her aunt. ‘When God requires of us the account of our lives, we shall have to confess our advantages as well as our offences ; and if we commit what people in general call little sins, when our advantages have been great, we must be as wicked as persons who commit greater sins with fewer advantages.’

‘I do not think,’ said Margaret, ‘that I have been taught as much as Amy.’

‘That is not the question, my dear. The real thing to ask ourselves is, whether we have made the best use of the instruction we have had ; not whether we have had less than others. And one blessing—the first and greatest of all—is given to each of us alike at our baptism ; for we are told, in the service which is then used, that God is pleased at that time to regenerate us with His Holy Spirit ; and if we chose to follow His guidance, we should constantly be kept in the right way.’

‘I have heard Amy talk in that manner,’ said Margaret ; ‘but indeed, aunt Herbert, I never understood what she meant.’

‘Will you tell me, my dear, whether you have ever wished to do right?’

‘Oh yes, very often ; only it is so much trouble always to think about it.’

‘And have you not often admired people whom you saw conquering their evil dispositions, and now and then tried to imitate them, and really felt pleasure in doing it?’

‘Yes,’ replied Margaret, ‘sometimes.’

‘All these better feelings,’ continued Mrs Herbert, ‘were not your own by nature ; they were the work of that better spirit of which I have been speaking : and if you had prayed to God to keep them in your heart, and had endeavoured to act from them, you would have found them becoming stronger and stronger every day ; and then, instead of being inclined to vanity and selfishness, you would be humble, and gentle, and self-denying : and though you might often do wrong—because no one in this world can ever entirely get rid of his evil nature—yet you would be very sorry for it ; and God, for the sake of your blessed Saviour, would forgive you, when you prayed to Him, and He would make you every day holier and happier ; He would cause all the troubles of the world to appear light to you ; and when you had lived here as long as He knew that it was necessary for your good, He would take you to heaven.’

‘And will it never be so now ?’ exclaimed Margaret, touched at last by her aunt’s words.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Herbert, ‘if you will begin at once : but, indeed, my love, there must be no delay. If you are really sorry for having offended God, there can be no doubt of His forgiveness ; but it must always be asked in our Saviour’s name. It is only for His sake that we have anything granted us ; and the blessings bestowed at our baptism would never have been ours if He had not died to purchase them.’

‘I think, aunt Herbert,’ said Margaret, with earnestness, ‘that I should never have done wrong things if I had always had you to talk to me.’

‘Indeed, my love, you would. It is not any human power that can keep us from sin. But you are very young ; and if you were to begin at once, praying to God to assist you, and really trying to please Him in everything, you might, in time, become as good as those saints and holy people of whom we read in the Bible.’

‘No, never !’ exclaimed Margaret ; ‘it would be quite impossible.’

‘They were but human beings,’ replied Mrs Herbert ; ‘and some of them had not even the same advantages that we have. It requires nothing but real sincerity and trust in God.’

‘I should like to be as good as they were,’ said Margaret, ‘if ——’ and here she paused.

‘If you could be so without any trouble. But, my dear Mar-

garet, consider what your condition will be at the end of your life, if you continue in this state of mind. How will you feel when you look back upon, perhaps, a long life, and know that it has been entirely wasted, that you have never really tried to serve God, and that you will probably never go to heaven, because you would not take the trouble?’

‘It cannot be necessary to be so very good,’ said Margaret.

‘It is quite necessary to *try* to be,’ answered Mrs Herbert. ‘God will never accept anything but our whole hearts. You must remember our Saviour’s words, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Certainly this must mean that we are to be what you call *very good*.’

‘But,’ said Margaret, ‘I thought no one could be good enough to deserve to go to heaven.’

‘No, indeed, they cannot. But supposing, Margaret, that a great prince were to come to Emmerton and offer to adopt you as his child, and were to promise that, if you would do everything he wished, he would, in time, take you to his kingdom, and give you riches and honours beyond all that you could possibly imagine, do you not see that, although you never could have merited such kindness, though it would be a perfectly free gift on his part, yet that, if you refused to obey, you would justly deserve to lose it?’

Margaret assented; but she did not seem entirely to understand what was intended, and Mrs Herbert continued: ‘This is exactly the case with ourselves, my dear. God gives us all the promise of heaven, for the sake of our Saviour, when we are baptized; but He also requires that we should obey Him; and therefore, if we neglect to do so, the consequences must be our own eternal misery.’

‘I don’t mean,’ said Margaret, ‘that I would not try to be good at all; but that I don’t think it can be necessary to be like the saints and people who shut themselves up, and never saw any one.’

Mrs Herbert half smiled as she replied, ‘Certainly God does not require that we should all live exactly the same lives as the persons you mention—He does not command us all to leave our homes and go to deserts; but it is possible to have the same tempers and dispositions as the saints, though we may live in our own families.’

‘How can we set about being so good?’ asked Margaret.

‘First of all,’ replied her aunt, ‘we must pray to God to give

us the will ; and when we have that, half our difficulty will be over. It is seldom really hard to us to do what we earnestly desire ; even things which seemed quite impossible have been accomplished by a real earnestness of purpose. There is a story told of a man whose father from extravagance had brought his family to great poverty, and who, when he became of age, instead of being possessed of large estates, was absolutely penniless. He was standing one day upon the top of a very high hill, looking over a vast extent of country that had belonged to his ancestors, and which, but for his father's folly, would have been his, when the idea entered his mind that it would be possible by his own exertions to recover all that had been lost. From that moment he resolved that he would never rest till he had achieved his wishes. He worked by night and by day, he gave himself no rest and no amusement ; and at length he succeeded, and the estate was his. And though the end of the story is a very sad one, and shows us the sin and folly of setting our hearts on earthly objects,—for we are told that the poor man became from habit a miser as soon as he gained his end,—yet we may learn from it how much is in the power of persons who are really and sincerely in earnest.'

'I think I could have felt like that man,' said Margaret ; 'but I should never care so much about being good.'

'You would if you could once see how beautiful goodness is,' replied her aunt ; 'if an angel were to be always at your side, you would long to resemble him.'

'Oh yes !' said Margaret ; 'but that is not possible ; and every one I see is much the same as I am ; only Amy and Miss Morton perhaps are different.'

'But you can read your Bible,' answered Mrs Herbert ; 'and you can see there how holy, and merciful, and gentle our Saviour was. His perfect purity is set before us to excite our longings to obtain it, as the estates of that poor man were set before him. It is the image of that holiness which we should have possessed if Adam had never sinned ; and if we had but equal resolution, we may have equal success ; not, indeed, entirely in this world, because we still must carry about with us an evil nature, but in a far greater degree than we are at all apt to imagine.'

'Did you ever know any one who was so very good ?' asked Margaret.

'Yes,' replied Mrs Herbert ; 'and I have watched by their death-beds, and witnessed their peace and happiness in the midst

of the most severe sufferings. I think, Margaret, if you had ever seen a real Christian die, you would long to be like them.'

'Should I?' said Margaret, thoughtfully. 'I never saw any one die yet; but poor Edward was always good; and they said he was quite happy.'

'Yes,' replied her aunt; 'and if he were happy then, when lying on a sick-bed, how much more happy must he be now! I know you would wish to go to him.'

'And Rose,' exclaimed Margaret, bursting into tears. 'Oh, aunt Herbert, do you think I shall ever see her again?'

'I am sure you will, my dear child, if you will only pray to God to make you good and holy, and fit for the home to which He has taken her. Will you begin at once, and never neglect your prayers, and try with all your heart to attend to them, and not allow your thoughts to wander? and will you recollect how very many wrong things you have done, and ask Him to forgive you for your Saviour's sake? And then will you endeavour, in every little trifling thing, to give up your own will, and think only of what is right?'

'I will try,' answered Margaret.

'If you try,' said Mrs Herbert, 'not trusting to yourself at all, but praying to God constantly to help you, and give you His Holy Spirit, you may be quite sure of succeeding. Only you must remember that it is absolutely necessary to try *very much*, and not give up the attempt in despair because you find it difficult at first, and are constantly falling back to your old habits; and especially you must not think it sufficient to say your prayers only in the morning and evening; but you must pray to God at all times, and in all places, whenever you are in any danger of yielding to temptation. If you had prayed, I do not think you would have acted as you did towards Miss Morton; you would have seen the cruelty of wilfully adding to her anxiety; and you would have been frightened at the thought of being deceitful.'

'I think, now, it was very wicked,' said Margaret, sighing deeply; 'but can I do anything to make up for it?'

'You cannot do anything to make amends to God,' answered Mrs Herbert. 'When we have once sinned, no future goodness can wipe out the stain; all that we can do is to trust that He will forgive us for our Saviour's sake; but we can, in a certain degree, make amends to our fellow-creatures; and the right thing for you now will be to acknowledge to Miss Morton, when she is able to see you, how very great your fault has been, and then to show,

by every means in your power, that you are anxious to consult her happiness.'

'And will she forgive me, do you think?' asked Margaret.

'Why should you doubt it?' replied her aunt. 'You have never known her anything but affectionate, and kind, and forgetful of herself. I am sure *she* will forgive, because she will only hear your words, and see your outward actions; but, my dear Margaret, it will be infinitely more important that you should be forgiven by God, and He will look at the heart.'

'Indeed, indeed, I am sorry,' exclaimed Margaret. 'I do not think I shall ever do such things again.'

'I do most earnestly trust that you will not,' said Mrs Herbert. 'God only knows the effect which the faults of our childhood have upon our whole lives. You will not think, my love, because I have spoken seriously, that I have not been sorry for all you have suffered.'

'I like to hear what you say, aunt Herbert,' replied Margaret; 'but some people I cannot endure, and I never listen to them.'

'You must try and listen to every one who wishes to do you good, my dear. And now that we have talked together once, I hope we shall do so often; and whenever you are in any difficulty in which I can help you, you must remember that I am one of your nearest relations, and therefore, of course, I shall love and take an interest in you.'

'And will you ask mamma to forgive me?' said Margaret. 'I am more afraid of her anger than of any other person's.'

'She is not in a state to think of anything now,' replied Mrs Herbert; 'but I will certainly speak to her when I see she is able to listen; and I trust you will remember what I said about Miss Morton.'

Margaret promised that she would think of it often, and begged to see her whenever she felt equal to it; and Mrs Herbert, after kissing her affectionately, left her with a hope that the effects of the conversation might be lasting.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SADLY and wearily the hours lingered on till the day that had been fixed for the funeral of the innocent child, who had ever been the loveliest and most cherished of the family at

Emmerton. It was a time of bitter trial to all; even the servants sighed deeply as they missed the young voice which had once sounded so gaily through the house, and felt that the low rooms and the long winding passages were more gloomy, and the old pictures and curiously-fashioned furniture more strange and distasteful to them, when they were no longer brightened by the sunny smile with which little Rose had never failed to greet them. There was an unnatural oppression upon every heart, and few felt it more than Amy: she had never before been a witness of real sorrow, and it was like entering upon a new and painful state of existence; for every one appeared altered—Frank especially, who had returned from Mr Dornford's the day after the death of his little sister, was completely altered; his spirits were entirely subdued; and his only satisfaction seemed to be in wandering over the house, and collecting everything that had belonged to Rose, but without any other object than that of looking at and sighing over them. Amy longed to comfort him; but she did not know what to say, for she was herself sharing in his grief, and there was a gloom over her feelings which few other events could have produced.

At her own request, she had been taken by her mother to look at her little cousin as she lay in her coffin; and although some who had felt more of this world's sorrow might have gazed upon her with calmness, and envied a rest so peaceful, Amy could see only that a change, far beyond her comprehension, had passed over her, which made even the heavenly beauty of her features appear awful. There was the same fair, open forehead, the same long, silken eye-lashes, almost the same sweet smile upon the lips, which she had often admired when Rose was sleeping; but there was also the fixed, immovable expression which only death can give; and when she kissed the pale, marble cheek, and shrank away, alarmed at the icy coldness of its touch, it seemed impossible to believe that a form so still should ever have been gifted with life, and still more impossible to realise that she must herself one day be like it.

Mrs Herbert said nothing at first, knowing that words could scarcely add to the lesson which such a sight must bring; and Amy felt as if the sound of her own voice would have been as irreverent in that chamber as in the midst of the services of the church. Long and earnestly she gazed upon the fair, motionless image of little Rose; and then, when she had once more kissed her for the last time, Mrs Herbert gently said, 'Amy, shall we

pray that our lives may be as innocent, and our deaths as peaceful?' and, kneeling down, she repeated the prayer appointed by the Church to be used at the burial of the dead, to console and warn the living. The impression of those moments was never effaced from Amy's mind; and when in after years she looked back with gratitude upon the early release of Rose, the remembrance of her calm face often came before her, as an earnest of the perfect peace which she trusted might one day be granted to herself: even then, when the first feeling of awe had subsided, it was a relief that she had seen her; for the thought of death was no longer as dreadful as it had been, and she was able to talk freely to her mother, and tell her of many difficulties and fears which had often crossed her mind before, but which there had never seemed a fitting opportunity to mention. Her only real comfort, indeed, during these melancholy days, was in being with her father and mother; for there was something in Miss Morton's manner which distressed and pained her. She was as kind and affectionate as ever, but she did not appear as anxious to have Amy with her as might have been expected. Sometimes, even after having expressed a wish that she should remain with her, she would suddenly stop in the midst of her conversation, and continue silent for several minutes, and perhaps make some excuse in order to send her away; and although this was always done in the most considerate manner, yet Amy did not fail to notice it; and her heart became more heavy as she thought that possibly, after all, Emily did not really care for her very much, and that now little Rose was gone, she would never love any one again.

Mrs Herbert understood the reason of this change of manner, but it could not be explained to Amy. She saw that Emily, under the belief of being soon compelled to leave Emmerton, was afraid of making Amy too necessary to her happiness. She was desirous of learning to live without any great objects of affection, fearing that she might rest on them rather than on God; but though such a wish might be natural after the loss of so many whom she had loved, Mrs Herbert knew that it would not be likely to continue, when her mind returned to its natural state. She would then see that it is God's will that we should have parents, and children, and friends to love; and that if we have been grateful for such treasures, and given the first place in our hearts to Him while we possessed them, He will often, when one is taken from us, in mercy grant us another to supply its place;

and she would be able to acknowledge how great a blessing it was that she had learned to love Amy before she had been called to part from Rose.

As yet, however, Emily could feel nothing of this. She was indeed resigned, and could spend hours in looking upon her darling Rose, and thinking of her great happiness, and praying that God would make her fit to dwell with her again ; but the thought that she had loved her too well was still predominant ; and when her heart turned to Amy, and she was conscious how much happiness might still be enjoyed on earth, she feared to dwell upon the idea, and tried to believe that it would be possible to live without having more than a common regard and interest for all who had been kind to her.

The endeavour, however, did not succeed. Amy's winning manner, and thoughtful attention, and warm affection, were irresistible ; every hour brought some proof of her love, and every hour Emily became more and more aware how great would be the pain of leaving Emmerton. Yet, believing that it must be endured, she resolved upon delaying the trial only till she had taken the last, long farewell of little Rose, and then to lose no time in making arrangements for her departure. But for Mrs Herbert's presence, she would have hesitated at leaving Mrs Harrington whilst so ill ; but the exertion which was now so much required, had rather roused Mrs Herbert, and given her increased strength and energy, than overpowered her ; and Emily felt that her own health must suffer, if she were to continue much longer with so great a pressure upon her mind.

The only friend with whom she could reside till another situation was obtained was her former governess ; for the aunt who had been the means of placing her with Mrs Harrington was living abroad : and when once her determination was fixed, she lost no time in writing to claim the fulfilment of the promise of receiving her, and to beg that her friend would exert herself to find some family where she might be admitted as a governess, for the position she held at Emmerton it would be impossible to occupy again. The letter was written and sent, yet Emily could not summon courage to mention it to Mrs Herbert. The shadow of comfort seemed still left whilst her determination remained secret in her own mind—at least no one spoke of her departure openly, although it was certain that Mrs Herbert must really know that it was intended, from the manner in which it had frequently been implied in their conversations. Dora came to her frequently, and

Margaret sent a request that she might speak to her soon ; but Emily dreaded and avoided an interview which must recall so much that was painful ; and once when they met in Mrs Harrington's room, though her manner showed how entirely she had forgiven her, yet both felt relieved upon Margaret's being called away immediately afterwards, so as to afford no opportunity for mentioning the subject. It was the evening on which she was to look upon Rose for the last time, and all her resolution was required to enable her to bear the trial ; but strength was granted to her then as it had been before ; and when it was over, she found a comfort which nothing earthly could have afforded, in praying that God would enable her to give herself up wholly to His service, and take her to Himself when her heart had been made meet for His presence.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IT was a calm and sunny morning on which little Rose was carried to her grave, and with it came a feeling of hope and peace to some of the family at Emmerton, for it was the promise of the spring amid the dreariness of winter ; and those who had accustomed themselves to read the truths of religion in the silent language of nature could not but view it as the type of that morning of the Resurrection—the spring-time of eternity—when they might trust to receive again the treasure from which they were now called to part for a season.

Many of the cottagers were assembled to watch the melancholy train as it wound through the village ; for Rose had been a favourite with all, and there had been heavy hearts and sorrowing faces when it was first known that she would never visit them again ; and by a few amongst them, also, the brightness of the morning was welcomed with satisfaction ; for although, to careless minds, the gay sunshine appeared but a mockery on a day of so much sadness, they who were more chastened by affliction felt that it suited well with the beauty and innocence of a child who had been taken to happiness before she had tasted of sorrow. Several, to show their respect for Mr Harrington, followed the procession to the church ; and amongst them old Stephen, notwithstanding his age and infirmities, placed himself the foremost.

He had borne the intelligence of the accident, and its consequences, with tolerable composure, after the first shock was past; for he was an old man, he said, and 'twould be but a very few years, perhaps not one, before he trusted he should see her sweet little face again. It might be hard for those who were young to see others taken away, but 'twas very different for the old. He had had a warning lately; and perhaps the next time the bell tolled it might be for him.

Yet, notwithstanding his outward calmness, Stephen felt deeply in his heart; he was anxious and restless, longing to be able to move, that he might go to Emmerton and get permission to look once more upon his little pet; and at last when dissuaded from attempting it, he declared that nothing should prevent him from attending at her funeral, if it were only as a mark of his duty to the family.

The exertion was greater than in prudence he should have made; but Stephen had seldom been ruled even by those whom he called his masters; and he kept to his determination, and slowly and with difficulty walked to the church. It was nearly filled; and Mr Walton, as he looked upon the sorrowing faces which surrounded him, felt that his task was a difficult one; but his thoughts turned from Rose lying in her coffin to Rose as she really was—an angel in heaven, and the weight passed from his heart, and he was enabled firmly and unfalteringly to go through the service. Mr Harrington's face was of a deadly paleness, though he remained perfectly calm till the moment when the body of his darling child was lowered to its resting-place in the tomb of her ancestors; but then his fortitude forsook him; and when the earth fell with a dull, heavy sound upon the coffin, he covered his face with his hands, and leaned against the wall for support, vainly endeavouring to conceal his grief.

There were few present who did not participate in it; and when he left the church many glances of sympathy were cast on him by persons with whose names even he was unacquainted; but Stephen could not be contented with looks; forgetting the years that had elapsed since he had held him in his arms, and taught him to guide his pony, and conscious only of the affection which he felt for the family, he stopped him as he passed the church-yard gate, and seizing both his hands exclaimed—'Tis a sad day for us all, sir, and there's none but will feel for you; only we would not have her back again, for she was too good for this world.'

‘Thank you, thank you, Stephen,’ said Mr Harrington, returning the pressure warmly; ‘we will talk another day, but not now.’

‘No, not now,’ replied Stephen; ‘only I couldn’t help letting your honour see that I thought of you. I must go home now;’ adding, to himself, ‘the Colonel, I suppose, will hardly remember me.’

‘The Colonel will remember you, though, Stephen,’ said Colonel Herbert, taking his hand. ‘It would be a hard thing to come back to England, and forget one’s oldest and best friends. But I shall see you soon, I hope, in your own cottage, when we are all better and happier.’

‘I don’t like my cottage as I did,’ replied Stephen, ‘I shall often think it was the cause of it all,—not but what it’s wrong, though; for God’s will was the cause, and His will must be done.’

‘Yes,’ said Colonel Herbert; ‘and we shall all learn, I hope, to be resigned.’

‘In time, sir,—there’s nothing like time and good thoughts. And you will come and see me then, sir, and bring young madam with you, and Miss Amy. How her little face brightened when she talked to me of your coming home! We, none of us thought then what was going to happen just afterwards.’

‘I must not stay now, Stephen,’ said Colonel Herbert; ‘Mr Harrington is already standing by the carriage. But we will talk about Amy another time.’

‘And the young lady, sir,—Miss Morton,—I should like just to know about her; they say she takes on sadly.’

‘She is better,’ replied Colonel Herbert. ‘Of course it was a dreadful shock to her.’

‘Ah, yes! they were always together,’ said Stephen. ‘Nobody dreamed of their being parted so soon. But they will meet,—we shall all meet again.’

‘May God grant it!’ said Colonel Herbert, as he shook the old steward warmly by the hand, and then, hastily walking away, he joined Mr Harrington.

On his return home, Colonel Herbert went immediately to his wife to inquire for Mrs Harrington and Emily. The former he found had been but slightly aroused from her apathy, even when purposely told what was passing; but Emily was better than Mrs Herbert had supposed possible. The worst suffering had been over on the preceding evening; and she was now able to

converse tranquilly, and even again to allude to her future prospects. This, however, arose from a restless anxiety that her plans should be finally fixed. She longed to speak to Mr Harrington, and decide at once upon leaving Emmerton, feeling that her mind would never really be calm till this had been done; and she inquired eagerly of Mrs Herbert, when she thought it would be possible for him to allow her a few moments' conversation. 'I know it cannot be to-day,' she said; 'it would be cruel to ask it; but I cannot rest satisfied till I have seen him.'

'I am not sure that it might not be to-day, my dear,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'If you have anything on your mind, he would be most anxious to relieve you.'

'It is on my mind, heavily,' said Emily; 'but I would not for the world he should be troubled with my affairs when he has so much to oppress him.'

'If it is anything in which he can be of use, perhaps it may interest and please him,' answered Mrs Herbert.

'It is nothing of that kind,' said Emily, resolving with great difficulty to mention her intentions openly. 'I wish to tell him that I must leave Emmerton. I daresay he would name the subject to me if I did not speak first.'

'Will you let us talk to him, my dear? It might save you pain; and we might be able, together, to form some plan for your future happiness. You will trust us, I think, to arrange for you.'

'Oh!' exclaimed Emily, 'if I do not trust you, whom have I on earth to rest upon? Will you really speak about it as soon as you can? Indeed, I must leave this place soon.'

'You may depend upon my not delaying one moment longer than is necessary,' said Mrs Herbert. 'Perhaps this afternoon he may be able to listen.'

'And may I have Amy with me till then?' asked Emily; and then, checking herself, she added, 'but perhaps it will be better not; she will be happier with you.'

'No, indeed, my dear, she will not. You cannot give her a greater pleasure—especially if she can feel that it is any comfort to you.'

'It is only too great a comfort,' said Emily; 'but to-day, may be nearly the last time.'

'And therefore she shall come to you directly. She is walking in the garden at present; for she has been very unhappy, and could not fix her attention to anything in the house.'

‘I think I should like to walk too,’ said Emily. ‘I must be with the family, and go out again now. And when I am with her I can bear everything better; and I must tell her myself that I am going.’

‘Not to-day,’ replied Mrs Herbert. ‘Wait till we have spoken to my brother; and then, perhaps, we may be able to give her a little consolation, for she will feel dreadfully.’

Emily knew that it would have been a relief to have mentioned the subject at once; but she assented instantly to Mrs Herbert’s wishes, unwilling to give a moment’s unnecessary pain to any one, especially to Amy. The restriction prevented her from finding as much satisfaction in her walk as she might otherwise have done; but to Amy it brought feelings more approaching to pleasure than any she had experienced for the last week; for it seemed like the restoration of the days when Emily was always delighted with her society. ‘I thought, perhaps, you would come out,’ she said, ‘at least in the afternoon; for I am sure you will never feel better while you sit alone in the house.’

‘It is like a spring day,’ said Emily. ‘Who could imagine we were now in the beginning of January.’

‘It does not seem like a spring day, though,’ said Amy, sadly. ‘I never thought before that sunshine could be so melancholy.’

‘It will be cheerful to you again, soon. When you go back to the cottage with your papa and mamma, you will feel just as you used to do.’

‘No,’ said Amy; ‘nothing will seem as it used to be while you are unhappy.’

‘I am not going to be miserable,’ answered Emily, endeavouring to smile. ‘I know there is not really any cause for it. My darling Rose is far happier than we can imagine; and whilst there are so many duties to be attended to, I hope I shall never sit down idly to repine at the will of God.’

‘Rose must be happy,’ exclaimed Amy. ‘I thought just now I should like to be her.’

‘We should all like it,’ said Emily, ‘if we could only see her as she now is. Yet I believe it is really a great blessing that we do not know more clearly what heaven is like; for if we did we should sometimes be scarcely able to endure our life here, even when it is the most blessed.’

‘I wish I could know, though,’ replied Amy; ‘it would make me so happy to think of going there.’

‘But, then, you must remember,’ said Emily, ‘that if we had once seen the beauty of heaven we should have no pleasure comparatively upon earth. There are a great many things we enjoy now, which are very innocent and good, and help us to bear up against sorrow ; but they would be of no use to us if we could contrast them with the glories of heaven. This bright sunshine, for instance, and the lawn, and the evergreens, and the water, and all that beautiful country beyond, would seem nothing if we could know how much more beautiful the world is to which we hope to be taken when we die.’

‘I see that,’ replied Amy, ‘because I remember, after I had been at Rochford Park, the cottage seemed quite changed, and not half as pretty as it was before—yet it was not really altered ; but I do not think I should have cared so much if I had thought that I should ever live there.’

‘You will not care again,’ said Emily, ‘if you will learn to look upon all beautiful things as the types or images of the treasures of heaven ; for no one will desire very much to possess an imperfect picture of any object when he is soon to enjoy the reality. I can understand your feeling, though, entirely ; and Rochford Park, I have heard, is very lovely.’

‘But the people who live there are not lovely,’ said Amy ; ‘only Mr Cunningham, I like. As for Miss Cunningham, I am afraid I shall dislike her more than ever now.’

‘You must try not,’ replied Emily. ‘She might have been very different with better education ; and we might have been like her if our temptations had been as great.’

‘Not you,’ said Amy ; ‘I am sure it is impossible.’

‘Nothing of the kind is impossible, dearest,’ replied Emily. ‘We might all have been like the worst persons that ever lived if we had not received such great advantages ; and, even now, God will not consider us better than others if we do not profit by them. There are many of us who bear a very good character in the world, and yet must appear hateful in the sight of God.’

‘I think that is papa just come out of the house,’ exclaimed Amy.

Emily stopped and trembled. ‘I do not think I can speak to him now,’ she said, faintly. ‘Will you come with me into another walk ?’

‘The one leading to the lake is the most private,’ said Amy ; ‘only there is not so much sunshine there.’

Emily did not reply, but moved quickly away ; and a few

minutes afterwards Mr Harrington and his sister joined Colonel Herbert on the terrace. They walked for some time almost in silence ; and Amy, as she watched them could not help wishing that her mamma might see Miss Morton, and come to her, for it would be a pleasure to both of them ; and it did not seem that she was doing any good in being with her uncle. After a time, however, something was said which apparently interested Mr Harrington ; for he listened attentively while Colonel Herbert spoke, and then answered him with greater animation than he had before shown. Amy had a full opportunity for observing all this, as Emily had become suddenly silent. She also was looking at the party on the terrace, and was evidently thinking only of them. The conversation lasted for a considerable time, and Amy, fearing that Miss Morton would be fatigued, begged her to go in ; but she answered, rather hurriedly, that she would much rather not ; and Amy was not inclined to press the matter, for the unusually mild air and the brightness of the weather had seldom been so refreshing to her.

Sometimes, as she watched her father, she thought the conversation must have some reference to Emily, for he looked frequently towards her ; and Mrs Herbert's smile, as they once unexpectedly met at the angle of the terrace, made her hope that the subject might be an agreeable one. She did not, however, dwell much upon the idea, having never understood that it was likely for any change to take place in Emily's situation ; but just as she was about again to propose that they should go in, Colonel Herbert left Mr Harrington, and coming towards them, told Amy that she had better walk with her mamma, as he wished to speak to Miss Morton a few minutes alone. 'I will not detain you long,' he added, turning to Emily ; 'for I am sure you must be tired. Perhaps you would rather rest yourself first ?'

'Oh no !' exclaimed Emily ; 'I am not in the least tired ; and I would much rather hear everything now.'

'You will, perhaps, scarcely imagine the subject I wish to mention,' said Colonel Herbert, as he walked by her side ; 'but you have said that you would give us the privilege of old friends, and allow us to name your wishes to Mr Harrington ; and though I am so little known to you, I hope, when you have heard my reasons, you will not think me intrusive in wishing to speak of them to yourself, personally. If your memory could carry you back as far as mine, I think you would understand why I can never consider you a stranger.'

‘Indeed, I can remember,’ said Emily, and her voice faltered. ‘They were my happiest days, and every person connected with them must always be remembered by me, particularly one who was so well acquainted with my family, and so kind to them.’

‘Then we will not be strangers,’ said Colonel Herbert, ‘but old friends who have a mutual interest in each other’s welfare. If you will promise to think of me in that light, I shall have less hesitation in asking a favour of you.’

‘Of me !’ exclaimed Emily, with surprise ; ‘you cannot doubt my willingness to grant anything you may require ; but it seems impossible that I should be able to do anything for you.’

‘I understand,’ replied Colonel Herbert, ‘that it is your wish now to leave Emmerton, and Mr Harrington agrees in thinking that it may perhaps be better ; but he is very unwilling that you should go at once amongst strangers, with whom you can have no sympathy ; and the idea of it has made him extremely uncomfortable, for he feels, with Mrs Herbert and myself, that from our early acquaintance we are in a great degree your guardians and protectors, and bound to consult your happiness.’

‘You are very, very kind,’ said Emily ; ‘but I doubt if you will be able to think of anything better for me in the end.’

‘Will you try the plan we wish to propose ?’ said Colonel Herbert. ‘If it should not conduce to your happiness, we should be the first to wish that it might be altered.’

‘I will do anything that is thought right,’ replied Emily.

‘Then,’ said Colonel Herbert, ‘will you consent to return with us to the cottage, and take Amy for your pupil ?’

Emily was silent, and for an instant Colonel Herbert feared that some objection might exist in her mind for which he was not prepared ; but when he looked at her countenance, he saw that she was endeavouring to answer him calmly. Twice she tried to speak, but her words were choked ; and at last, giving way entirely, she burst into tears. Colonel Herbert felt that his presence must be painful to her, and merely saying that he would wait for an answer till she had had more time for consideration, he left her, and she was immediately afterwards joined by Mrs Herbert.

‘I am afraid you have been startled, my dear,’ she said ; ‘Colonel Herbert insisted upon speaking to you himself ; but men never know how to manage these things well.’

‘Oh ! indeed,’ said Emily, ‘he has only been too kind ; but it

cannot really be true ; you cannot mean that I shall not be obliged to go away from you ?'

'It must depend entirely upon your own choice,' replied Mrs Herbert. 'If you can be happy with us, and will consent to take charge of Amy, you will ease me of a burden which is too much for my health, and give us all most heartfelt pleasure.'

'But Mr Harrington,' said Emily, feeling as if there must be some objection to a plan which promised so many blessings at a moment when she was almost overwhelmed with sorrow.

'My brother feels with us entirely ; it will be a real relief to him to know that you are happy, or at least in the way of becoming so ; for we can only hope to make you tranquil and comfortable at first. And now I shall not let you stay here any longer, but you must go to your room, and I will send Amy to you. We thought that, perhaps, you would like to name the subject to her yourself.'

Emily spent the few moments that elapsed before Amy's knock was heard at her door in endeavouring to realise the mercy thus granted her, and to feel grateful to God, who had bestowed it. Though almost confused by the suddenness of the idea, yet her first thought had been of Him ; and if in the time of sorrow she had prayed earnestly to be devoted to His service in thought, and word, and deed, still more earnestly did she now pray that no earthly blessings might ever lead her heart from Him.

Amy's countenance was sad when she entered. She had been talking to Dora, whose spirits were so much depressed that it was difficult to console her. Amy had seen comparatively little of her during the preceding week, for she had been in constant attendance upon her mother, or endeavouring to cheer Margaret ; but the latter did not now require so much sympathy ; she was quiet and sorrowful, but the first excitement of feeling was over ; and her aunt's conversation had in a great measure satisfied her mind as to her own share in the accident. Dora had, therefore, more time to give to her own reflections ; and they were very painful. Everything around her was melancholy ; and even her mother's abstraction and indifference were scarcely so distressing to witness as her father's silent suffering, and Frank's mournful face ; while the thought of Emily Morton was almost worse than either ; for Dora felt that she might have been a comfort to her now, if she had only been less unkind before. It gave her a pang to know that Amy was admitted to Emily's room at all times, though she had only been acquainted with her for a few months,

while her own visits were merely occasional ; it would have been far more natural and right that Emily should look to her as a companion ; and as she thought this, Dora's memory recalled all her past neglect and selfishness, and the bitterness of self-reproach added tenfold to her other sorrows. Amy heard it all, but could say little in reply. She knew that Dora had often acted very wrongly, and that now she was justly suffering for it ; but she also felt quite certain that Emily Morton did not for a moment think of it.

Dora, however, was not satisfied with this assurance ; she could not be, till she had spoken to Emily herself. 'I cannot bear,' she said, 'only to be allowed to go into her room now and then ; it seems as if she were quite cut off from us—and Margaret says the same ; for indeed, Amy, you cannot think how sorry Margaret is now for what she did. She has been speaking about it to me this morning, and she wishes so much to say something. I believe aunt Herbert made her promise to do it, when she had that long conversation with her the other day. When do you think Emily will be able to see us both ? I mean, not just for a few minutes, but really to talk to her.'

'I daresay she will to-morrow,' said Amy ; 'for I believe she intends going down-stairs as usual, now ; and then you will see how true it is that she does not think about anything, but really loves you very much.'

'She is almost an angel, I believe,' said Dora, earnestly.

'Yes, indeed she is,' exclaimed Amy ; 'I am afraid to think much about her being so good, because then I get a fancy that she will be taken away ; and I could not bear her to go.'

'But I don't think she will stay here,' said Dora.

'What do you mean ?' inquired Amy, hastily.

'It will be so different now to what it used to be. She will not have much to do with Margaret and me ; and I am nearly sure she will go.'

'But not yet—you cannot mean yet ?' said Amy. 'I daresay it may be when you are quite grown up ; but that is so far off.'

'I think she will leave us at once,' said Dora. 'I have often heard mamma say that she had but one very great reason for keeping her ; and you know that is all gone.'

'Yes,' said Amy, thoughtfully ; 'but she can teach you still.'

'Mamma's notions are changed, lately, I think,' replied Dora ; 'she does not like having a person who is a governess and no governess.'

‘But has she said anything to you?’ inquired Amy.

‘No; for poor mamma does not think of anything now. I don’t know when she will again.’

‘Then Miss Morton cannot possibly go away yet?’

‘Perhaps not; but at any rate she will before very long. I wonder you never yet thought about it, Amy.’

‘It seems quite impossible,’ said Amy. ‘I cannot think of Emmerton and you without her.’

‘She will never be happy here,’ replied Dora; ‘so perhaps it will be better; only I should be glad for her to remain here some time. I think I should try and make her comfortable.’

‘I must ask mamma,’ said Amy. ‘It makes me so unhappy to think about it. I shall never rest till it is quite certain.’

‘I don’t think any one knows for certain,’ replied Dora; ‘but you will soon learn from what Emily says herself.’

‘I cannot ask her,’ said Amy; ‘but I am sure mamma must know; and she must be come in by this time. I wonder whether what papa wished to say to Miss Morton had anything to do with it?’

‘Oh no! he would not be the person to talk to her. But you need not distress yourself so much, Amy; it will not be just yet.’

‘I must know,’ said Amy. And she ran off to her mother’s room; but she was stopped by Susan Reynolds, who told her that Miss Morton desired to speak to her. Amy’s fears immediately conjectured the intelligence she was to receive, and her face plainly betrayed her anxiety. ‘Is it anything very particular?’ she said, as she entered. ‘Is anything the matter?’

‘Why should you think so?’ replied Emily gently. ‘It is not very strange that I should like to have you with me.’

‘But Dora says,’—and here Amy paused, for she felt that to repeat the conversation would be to inquire into Miss Morton’s plans.

‘What does she say?’ asked Emily. ‘You are not afraid of telling me anything, are you?’

‘Not if it is right,’ replied Amy; ‘but I don’t think I ought to say this.’

‘Then you shall not,’ said Emily. ‘I am sure you will judge properly; only, if it is anything that concerns me, you need hardly think that I should be vexed.’

‘Are you quite sure? I should be so very glad to know; but I thought it would seem impertinent.’

‘I will let you ask anything you like,’ replied Emily ; ‘and if it is something I must not answer, I will tell you.’

‘You will not go away?’ said Amy, timidly, and at the same time looking anxiously in Miss Morton’s face.

‘I am going from Emmerton,’ replied Emily ; and poor Amy felt as if a shot had passed through her heart. ‘But I am not going far away, I hope,’ she added, as she watched the quiet tears that trickled down Amy’s cheek. ‘It depends upon you how far.’

‘Oh no!’ exclaimed Amy ; ‘it cannot depend upon me. You know I would never have you go away from me ; I would have you live with me always, and I would love you, and do everything for you, and I would attend to all your wishes ; and then, perhaps, some day you might say that I had made you happy.’

‘And will you really love your governess?’ said Emily. And she put her arm round Amy’s waist, and drew her fondly towards her.

The truth flashed in a moment across Amy’s mind. ‘Was that really what papa said?’ she exclaimed.

‘He asked me,’ replied Emily, ‘if I would go back with you to the cottage : and he said that you should be my pupil ; and now you shall decide.’

Amy could not answer ; for words are even more powerless to express joy than grief. But Emily needed no assurances ; and for the moment she yielded without fear to the consolation which an affection so deep was capable of affording her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THERE was a strange mixture of feeling in Amy’s mind, on the following morning, when she thought of all that had lately occurred. It was impossible to forget Rose, but it was equally impossible to avoid thinking of Emily ; and she immediately began to anticipate the pleasure of living with her, and exerting herself for her happiness. The new arrangement was satisfactory to every one, though when named to Mrs Harrington, she merely said, ‘Yes, certainly, it would do very well ;’ and then appeared to take no further interest in it. Even Dora

and Margaret felt it a comfort that Emily would be near them ; for now that they were about to lose her, they first began to be sensible of her value. Little unthought-of kindnesses and daily self-denials were remembered with regret that they had been so lightly appreciated : and Dora looked at her music-books, and Margaret at her portfolio, and sighed as they thought that they should have no one for the future to take an interest in them as Emily had done.

‘I shall envy you more than ever, Amy,’ said Dora, as they walked together in the garden a few days afterwards. ‘I always thought you were happier than we were ; and lately, I am sure of it.’

‘You will get better by and by,’ said Amy. ‘I know how you must feel,—the place is so altered.’

‘Yes,’ observed Margaret ; ‘and it will never be what it was again. It does not look the same.’

‘I think even the blue sky has grown dim,’ said Dora ; ‘yet I like to look at it, because I can think that little Rose is there. But the sky will never be dim to you, Amy.’

‘Why not ?’ asked Amy. ‘I know I must have a great many sorrows, just as other people have.’

‘But,’ replied Dora, ‘I am sure it is something in one’s own mind which causes it. The earth often looks gloomy when there is really nothing the matter ; but I do not think the sky would, if we never did wrong : and that is the reason why I do not think it ever will to you.’

‘Indeed, Dora,’ exclaimed Amy ; ‘you don’t know anything about me ; and you will find out some day how bad I am.’

‘I don’t wish to find it out,’ said Dora. ‘It pleases me to believe there are some people in the world who always do right.’

‘Then you shall believe it of mamma, and Mrs Walton, and Miss Morton,’ said Amy.

‘I don’t like to think of Emily,’ replied Dora. ‘When will she let us go and talk to her.’

‘I hope she will soon,’ said Margaret. ‘It quite weighs upon my mind.’

‘I told her yesterday that you wished it,’ answered Amy ; ‘and then she said you thought a great deal more about things than herself, and she did not like you to be distressed ; and that she had thought you would have understood her feelings by her manner at breakfast and dinner.’

‘That will not quite please my aunt,’ said Margaret. ‘I promised her I would speak to Emily myself; and I do wish very much to do what she likes.’

‘There is Miss Morton just coming down the steps,’ said Amy; ‘perhaps if I were to go away, you would like to say something now.’

Margaret rather hesitated, feeling half ashamed when the opportunity was given her; but Dora urged that there might be no delay; and Amy went into another walk.

‘I fancied,’ said Emily, as she came up to them, ‘that Amy was with you. Mr Walton is in the house, and wishes to see her.’

‘I will go and call her,’ said Dora; ‘she is only gone into one of the back walks.’

Emily begged she would not trouble herself; but Dora felt quite pleased with the opportunity of showing her a little attention; and Margaret and Emily were left alone. Margaret was extremely embarrassed; and Emily perceiving that something was the matter, made a few passing observations on the beauty of the weather.

Margaret’s answers were short, for her mind was pre-occupied; and it was not till she saw Dora returning that she summoned courage to say, ‘You would not let me speak to you before; but I must tell you now, I am so very sorry,—and I have wished so much that you should know it.’

‘Indeed, I have known it,’ replied Emily; ‘and I hoped you would have understood from my manner how little I have thought about it. We have both been suffering too much not to feel for each other; and I have had you in my mind very often, and wished that I could have comforted you.’

‘But it was not only that,’ continued Margaret; ‘I wanted to say, and so did Dora too, that we know we have often been very unkind, and done a great many wrong things; and we should be much happier if you would say that you forgive us.’

‘Will you?’ said Dora, who had been walking a few paces by their side.

‘I do not like to say it,’ replied Emily; ‘it seems now as if I had no right to do it. All the pleasure I have known for the last two years has been found in your family; and what I feel now is thankfulness that it has been so much greater than I deserve.’

‘But we did not make you happy,’ said Dora. ‘You would have been miserable if it had not been——’

'For Rose,' continued Emily, firmly. 'I do not know, indeed, how I should have felt without her ; but with her I had, at times, all that I dared desire ; and now God has given me blessings for which I can never be sufficiently grateful.'

'Yes,' said Dora ; 'Amy is a blessing to every one.'

'And you are blessings too,' replied Emily, in a tone of deep interest and kindness. 'You do not know the satisfaction you are affording me now ; and you may be unspeakable blessings to your parents.'

'We shall not know what to do when you are gone,' said Margaret ; 'and my aunt and Amy also.'

'Your mamma will recover herself by and by, I have no doubt ; and then we shall be so near, it will be scarcely like a separation.'

'There was one thing,' said Dora, 'which I thought I would ask you : but I am afraid you will not tell me if you had rather not.'

'I will tell you really, though,' replied Emily. 'I always try to say exactly what I mean.'

'Then do you think, sometimes, if we go to the cottage, you would be able to hear us play, and look at our drawings ? We shall be so very much at a loss without you.'

'I trust,' said Emily, 'that my being away will make but very little difference to you in those things ; you know I shall not be so far off but that I can come to you, or assist you whenever it will give you the smallest pleasure.'

Dora expressed her thanks, and felt how little she deserved such kindness ; and Margaret hoped that she would not leave them yet. 'Everything will seem a great deal worse then,' she said.

'Mrs Herbert intends staying with your mamma while she continues so ill, I believe,' replied Emily ; 'but when she is better, I heard Colonel Herbert say, he should like to go directly to the cottage.'

'Do you know what Dr Bailey thinks about mamma ?' asked Margaret.

'He says that she requires change, but she is not equal to the exertion of moving.'

'I wish we might go somewhere before Frank returns to school,' observed Dora. 'He has had such melancholy holidays.'

'Should you like to go to London ?' said Emily.

Margaret started at the idea. 'Oh no!—not to London; any place but that.'

'I thought you wished it once,' said Emily.

'Yes; but things are altered since then. I shall never wish to go there.'

Emily looked surprised; but she did not inquire the reason of Margaret's sudden alteration of feeling, thinking it was most probably caused by the loss they had all sustained; and remarking that Mr Walton might perhaps wish to see them before he went away, she proposed that they should go into the house. The mention of London brought many sad reflections to Margaret's mind; and while slowly following her sister and Emily, she began to think of Miss Cunningham, and to wonder what her feelings had been upon learning all that had happened, and whether the idea that she had been the origin of it had occurred to distress her. 'Do you think Lucy will go to London without us?' she said to Dora.

'She will never go at all, if she does not,' replied Dora. 'Papa will not consent to her being with us again as she used to be.'

'She will be very sorry about it,' said Margaret.

'Oh! it will not signify to her. She will find other persons to suit her just as well; and she will go to gay parties, and drive about in the parks, and forget us, and everything about us.'

'Not everything,' said Margaret. 'I am sure she cannot forget everything. She must feel for us.'

'Perhaps she may care for a day or two; but it is not her way to think on any subject long. Do you think it is?' added Dora, turning to Emily, and moving aside to allow her to pass before her into the house.

'I hope it may be, by and by,' was the reply; 'but I am afraid she has not been taught to think much as yet.'

'There is one of the Rochford servants coming down the avenue now,' said Dora. 'Perhaps he has brought a note or a message.'

'I suppose he is only come as usual to inquire for mamma,' said Margaret. 'Morris says Lord Rochford has sent nearly every day.'

There was, however, a note for Margaret, which was given her just as she was about to go into the drawing-room, but there was no time to read it till Mr Walton was gone.

He did not stay long, for he had seen Mrs Harrington, and

was anxious to return home to keep an engagement ; but he was very much pressed to repeat his visit, especially by Mrs Herbert, who hoped that seeing him might be effectual in exciting Mrs Harrington's interest. 'I think,' she said, 'that my sister will take more notice of you another time ; I remarked to-day that she listened more than usual to what you were saying.'

Mr Walton promised to return, if possible, the next day ; and then, taking his leave, Margaret was at liberty to read Miss Cunningham's note. It was short, and Margaret thought cool, although there were many expressions of sympathy for the family. 'Her brother,' she said, 'had begged her to write, but she had not much to say, though she was extremely sorry for them, and hoped that Mrs Harrington had not been very angry with Margaret. She expected soon to be able to drive over to Emmerton, and, in the meantime, should be very glad to hear of them all.'

'I would not give much for Miss Cunningham's affection after such a note as that,' said Dora.

'What did you expect from her?' asked Emily.

'I don't know, exactly ; but any one might have written it ; and after being with us so much, I think she might have said something more. I did not imagine she cared for me at all, but I thought she had some feeling for Margaret.'

'Do you think it cool?' said Margaret, turning to Emily.

'Rather,' she replied : 'but you could scarcely have supposed she would have written in any other way.'

'Why not?' asked Amy.

'Because it is seldom people feel much for sorrows that are not present to them. If Miss Cunningham had been with us for the last ten days she would probably have cared very much more.'

'She is so selfish,' observed Dora ; 'she never can sympathise with any one.'

'Indeed,' replied Emily, 'I think she would if she were taught to do it.'

'How can persons be taught to feel?' said Dora ; 'it must come naturally to them.'

'Not quite. The feelings are certainly given to us originally, but they may be very much increased by action. If Miss Cunningham were once taught to do little trifling kindnesses for her friends she would soon feel for them. You know it is almost a proverb that benefactors are fond of those on whom they confer favours.'

'I dare say you may be right,' said Dora ; 'but I cannot

imagine that Lucy Cunningham will ever be anything but a cold, hard-hearted, disagreeable girl. Margaret perhaps may find out her virtues some day or other, but I am afraid I never shall.'

Margaret was silent :—she was vexed and disappointed, but did not like to own it; and she was so fully aware of her unkindness to Emily, that she expected Lucy to be the same, forgetting how differently they had been circumstanced. Miss Cunningham's preference had flattered her, while she believed it real; but she was now beginning to perceive that, where selfishness is the foundation of the character, no trust can be placed in any professions of affection.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IT was about three weeks afterwards, during which time nothing particular had occurred to vary Amy's life at Emmerton, that Margaret received a second note from Miss Cunningham, which gave her much greater vexation than the former. It was written more naturally, but the tone was one of considerable annoyance.

Lord Rochford, at Mr Cunningham's request, had settled that the journey to London should be postponed another year, as, upon consideration, he thought Lucy too young to join in any amusements, and not sufficiently advanced in her education to profit by masters. The French governess was, therefore, to be dismissed, and another provided, who might be more equal to instruct her.

'This is the most provoking part of the whole business,' wrote Miss Cunningham. 'Madame was the kindest creature possible, and allowed me to do just as I chose in everything; and now I shall be pestered from morning till night by a stiff, formal, odious Englishwoman. And I must say, Margaret, that it is a very great deal your doing; at least, I am sure, if I had not gone to Emmerton, nothing of the kind would have been thought of; and George has grown so disagreeable lately, he is not to be endured.'

'It would be strange,' said Dora, when Margaret showed her the note, 'if, after all, we should go to London, now that Lucy is obliged to stay at home.'

Margaret was unprepared for the idea, for she had not been so much with her father as Dora, and was, therefore, not aware of the conversation that had lately passed between him and Mrs Herbert. Dora could not give her any certain information; but she knew that a plan was in agitation for some change; and she had overheard Colonel Herbert urging her father to try London. The reason of this was, not simply that Mrs Harrington required a different scene to relieve her spirits, but that it was also considered advisable to have the benefit of further medical advice. She had, indeed, partly recovered her interest in everyday occurrences, but her nerves had been so much shaken, that but little discernment was needed to discover how much she was altered. The necessary orders for the arrangement of the house were given as usual, but she had entirely lost the quick, restless activity which had formerly made her notice even the minutest inattention to her wishes; and when her morning occupations were over, she would sit abstracted and silent for hours, having apparently neither the power nor the inclination to move. Every noise startled, and every exertion was a trouble to her; her days were gloomy, and her nights disturbed: and her husband could not but have many anxious fears for the future, if she were to continue long in such a state. The only thing which really seemed to rouse and comfort her was the conversation of Mr Walton, whose visits at the Hall were now almost of daily occurrence. At first she had allowed him in silence to talk to Mrs Herbert; but, after a time, her interest in his observations was awakened; and Mrs Herbert, perceiving it, took frequent opportunities of leaving them together, and although the result of these interviews was as yet but slightly apparent, they gave Mrs Herbert many sanguine hopes that they might eventually be of infinite service.

As Mrs Harrington's health improved, Colonel Herbert became desirous of returning to the cottage, for he longed to enter upon the plan of life which he had so often pictured to himself; and he was afraid that, whilst Mrs Herbert remained at Emmerton, she would continue to exert herself far beyond her strength. It was impossible, also, that Miss Morton should recover her spirits whilst in a place where everything reminded her of little Rose; for although Amy was her constant companion, her occupations were gone, and her feelings unsettled; and Colonel Herbert, who watched her with interest, saw in her subdued, melancholy countenance an additional inducement for

hastening his departure. Mrs Harrington strongly objected to the idea of going to London, when the proposition was first made ; but her husband's uneasiness at length prevailed on her to consent, much to the distress of Margaret, who could look forward to nothing but gloom in a journey undertaken under such different circumstances from what she had originally anticipated. 'I wish,' she said to Dora, when the plan was mentioned as positively settled, 'that my uncle had proposed anything else ; there might have been a little pleasure in going to some other place, but there can be nothing but dulness and misery in London.'

'Yes,' said Dora ; 'I really think that sometimes having what we wish is a punishment to us ; not that I ever cared for London as you did, Margaret ; but I used to fancy that it would be nice to see all the sights.'

'I will never wish again,' said Margaret ; 'it only makes one disappointed when the time comes. I suppose now we shall go to a dull, quiet part of the town, and not see any one.'

'And have lessons,' continued Dora, 'without any person to help us, as Emily would have done ; and be engaged all day besides in attending upon mamma.'

Margaret remembered her conversation with Miss Cunningham, when she had been threatened with almost precisely the same kind of life ; and it was impossible not to feel that what Dora had said might be true ; her punishment seemed, indeed, to have been sent in the partial gratification of the wishes she had so wrongly indulged.

'How I envy Amy,' she exclaimed. 'Everything will be delightful to her, and everything will be wretched to us.'

'Amy deserves happiness,' said Dora. 'If we were to change places to-morrow, we should not feel as she does.'

'No,' replied Margaret. 'I don't think I should quite like living in that small cottage, and having things so different from what they are here ; but she does not care about it.'

'I think she used to do so,' said Dora ; 'but I am sure she must have seen lately that luxuries are no comfort when people are unhappy. It is not because of the cottage being smaller that I think we should not be happy if we lived there, but because we are not at all like Amy.'

'Of course not,' replied Margaret ; 'what two people in the world are alike ? And then we have been brought up so differently.'

'A great many people are alike, though,' said Dora; 'my aunt, and uncle, and Emily are, and Mr Walton, too; and I would rather think and feel as they do than live in a palace.'

'Would you?' said Margaret. 'I am not sure about that.'

'But indeed,' replied Dora, 'it must be better. I never thought about it till I knew Amy; but now I am quite certain. All such persons seem to carry about their happiness with them.'

'Not always. I have seen Amy unhappy; and Emily Morton, we all know, has been miserable.'

'Yes,' said Dora; 'but I am sure it is not like our unhappiness. There is always something to comfort them, because they think their troubles are sent them, and that they shall be happy when they die, even if they are ever so miserable now. I could bear anything if I did not think it would last for ever.'

'But how should it?' said Margaret. 'You know everything will come to an end at some time or other.'

'O Margaret!' exclaimed her sister, 'please don't talk so.'

'Why not? it is true.'

'No,' replied Dora; 'it cannot be true to say that troubles will come to an end when we die, if we have not tried to do right. Amy put it into my head to think about it one night, when I was with her as she was going to bed. She said that sleep was like death, and perhaps we might never wake again; and ever since that I have never gone to sleep without remembering it; and sometimes I become so frightened.'

'I should be frightened too,' said Margaret, 'if I thought about it; but I never do; it is very disagreeable.'

'Amy does not think it disagreeable,' answered Dora. 'She told me that same night how happy she was when she went to bed; and that she thought angels watched over her. Oh, how I wish I could be like her!'

'It makes me uncomfortable to think of it,' said Margaret. 'It must be impossible!'

'I should be glad to try, though,' replied Dora. 'I never saw any one else who made me wish it half as much. Almost all other good persons we have known have been so much older: and I never believed it was possible to be so good when one was so young.'

'It will be very nice to have her here again when we come back from London,' said Margaret; 'and Emily Morton, too. I could never bear this place now if it were not for them.'

At this instant Amy ran hastily into the room—evidently the bearer of some news which she was anxious to communicate. ‘Do you know,’ she exclaimed, ‘when you are going?’

‘No,’ replied Dora. ‘Papa, I think, has written about a house, but he has not had an answer.’

‘The answer is just come,’ continued Amy; ‘and there is some reason why you must hasten, rather : so my uncle says. I believe you must take the house from next Monday ; and, therefore, you are all to leave Ennerton on Tuesday, and to be in London on Wednesday.’

‘So very soon,’ said Dora, looking grave.

‘I was in hopes you would like it,’ replied Amy. ‘I know you did not wish it at first, but I fancied when the time came you really would be glad. Frank is delighted, because my uncle says he shall stay a day or two extra with you in London before he goes to school.’

‘And you will go back to the cottage,’ said Dora. ‘What a happy party you will be!’

‘Not Miss Morton,’ replied Amy; ‘I don’t think she will smile heartily for some time to come. But mamma wishes her to have everything just as she likes : and we are to walk to the cottage this afternoon to give some orders about her room, and then we are to call at the rectory.’

‘I should like to go with you,’ said Dora; ‘but mamma will want me at home ; there will be so many things to be done now, the time is so short. Are you quite sure it is fixed?’

‘I heard my uncle talking to papa about it ; and he said some of the servants were to go on Monday to have everything ready for you. But, dear Margaret, don’t look so very sad.’

‘I cannot help it,’ said Margaret, bursting into tears. ‘Two months ago it would have given me such pleasure ; and now it is so miserable.’

‘You will like it when you are there, I dare say,’ replied Amy.

‘Oh no ; how can I ? What will there be that will be pleasant, with mamma ill and in bad spirits, and not going out anywhere, or seeing any one?’

‘Should you have liked it better if Miss Cunningham had been there at the same time?’ asked Amy.

‘No,’ replied Margaret, almost indignantly. ‘It will never give me any pleasure to be with her again. She does not care for me, or for any one but herself ; and she does nothing but blame me for everything that happens that she does not like. I

wish sincerely I had never seen or heard of her ; perhaps then all might have been as it used to be.'

'It can do no good to think so now,' observed Dora, sighing. 'We had better make the best of it all, and go and ask mamma what orders we are to give to Morris.'

'Will Susan Reynolds go too ? It would be rather nice having both of them,' said Margaret.

'Susan Reynolds is not to stay with us,' replied Dora. 'There will be nothing for her to do. Perhaps, Amy, my aunt will take her to the cottage.'

'No, she will not do that,' answered Amy ; 'because I asked her about it yesterday, and she said it would be an additional servant ; and papa would not like it : but Mrs Saville, I believe, has determined on taking her ; and mamma thinks Susan will be quite contented with her by and by, though just now she is very unhappy at leaving Miss Morton.'

'I am glad she is not going far away,' said Dora. 'I have liked her lately a great deal better than Morris.'

'I like her,' observed Amy, 'because she is so fond of Miss Morton, and was so kind and thoughtful the other day, when she was in such distress.'

Margaret's face flushed upon hearing this allusion to the suffering of which she had been the cause, for she could never think of it without pain ; and each day, as she became more alive to Emily's goodness, she wondered more at her own selfishness. There was now, however, but little time for reflection—so much was to be quickly arranged in consequence of the hasty departure, that every moment was occupied : and Margaret began to forget her sorrow in the bustle of preparation. The excitement was of use also to Mrs Harrington. She gave her orders with something like energy, and seemed to have recovered a portion of her former quickness of discernment ; yet Mrs Herbert remarked little instances of consideration, which had before been quite foreign to her character. She herself collected many things that had belonged to little Rose, and giving them to Mrs Herbert, requested that they might be kept for Miss Morton till after they were gone ; and, on the day previous to the journey, she called Emily to her room, and, after expressing how much she felt for the affectionate care that had always been evinced to her darling child, she put into her hands a gold locket, enclosing a bright curl of chestnut hair, which she begged might be worn for the sake of one who had been very precious to them both. Emily was more

deeply touched by the tone in which this was spoken than even by the action itself. It told of a broken, humble spirit ; and much as she longed to comfort a mother's grief, she could not but rejoice in the effect that it appeared likely to produce on her character.

'We shall see you again to-morrow, as we pass the cottage,' said Mrs Harrington, when Emily had warmly thanked her for this remembrance ; 'Colonel Herbert insists upon our calling ; but it will only be for a moment, as we shall have a long day's journey before us.'

'Perhaps,' said Emily, 'you would allow me to remain here to-night. I might be able to assist you ; and it would be a pleasure to me to think that my last evening at Emmerton had been a useful one.'

But Mrs Harrington would on no account listen to the proposal. She saw that Emily was feeling very much even then, and she knew that it would be far worse for her on the following morning, when the house would be left silent and deserted. 'I shall be glad,' she said, 'to think that we leave you comfortably settled with friends who are so much interested about you ; and I am sure neither Mrs Herbert nor Amy would bear the thought of your staying behind.'

Emily did not press the proposal, for she was conscious that to act upon it would give her much pain ; but she employed the hour that elapsed before the carriage was ordered to take them to the cottage in arranging different things for Dora and Margaret, which they did not understand themselves, and which Morris thought herself too busy to attend to.

The moment for departure at length arrived ; but Amy would not allow that she was saying 'good-bye,' for she dwelt upon the thought of seeing her cousins the next morning.

'It is good-bye to Emmerton, though,' said Dora.

'Yes,' replied Amy ; 'and I don't like it at all, now it is come to the point. I shall always avoid the place till your return. It will be nearly the summer then, I suppose, or, at least, it will be quite late in the spring.'

'You must write very often,' said Dora, 'it will be our greatest pleasure when we are shut up in London.' And then, turning to Emily, she added, 'I have no right to ask any favour of you ; but you do not know how glad we should be to hear from you. We should think then that you had quite forgiven us.'

'I cannot write for that purpose,' said Emily, endeavouring

to smile ; but if you will let me tell you how I am, and what I am doing, for my own satisfaction, I think you will not find me negligent.'

'It seems,' said Amy, 'as if I had a great many things to say ; but everything is ready, and papa and mamma are waiting. You will be sure and call to-morrow.'

Emily would have spoken again, but her heart was full. Even the prospect of her life at the cottage could not, at that moment, make her forget all that had once constituted the charm of Emmerton ; and with a feeling of regard for Dora and Margaret, which a few months before she would have thought it almost impossible to experience, silently and sadly she followed Amy to the carriage.

The fire blazed cheerfully in the breakfast-room at Emmerton Cottage on the following morning, and the sun shone brightly through the window, as if to prophesy that the gloom of the winter would speedily be passed away. And there were faces assembled round the table, which suited well with the brilliancy of the weather. Even Emily, as she seated herself by Mrs Herbert's side, and listened to her tones of kindness, and watched Colonel Herbert's attention to her most trifling wishes, could scarcely feel sad ; or if an occasional shadow crossed her mind, it vanished as she looked upon Amy, and saw the deep, tranquil happiness expressed in every feature of her countenance. It was the happiness not merely of external circumstances, but of the inmost heart ; for Amy's recollections of the past were as peaceful as her hope for the future was unclouded ; and the blessing of a holy, humble spirit, was one which no wealth could have purchased. Many glances were turned to the window to watch for the carriage from Emmerton ; but breakfast was nearly over before it was seen turning the corner of the lane. Amy ran to the door to beg that they would come in ; but Mr Harrington thought it better not, as they were already so much later than they had intended. The joint entreaties of Dora and Margaret at last, however, prevailed, though the permission was granted only for one instant.

'I wished so much to do it,' said Dora, 'because I want to fancy how you go on when we are in London ; and it will not seem natural to think that Emily is here unless I have seen her.'

'I can hardly believe that she is really living with us,' replied Amy ; 'but I should be dreadfully sorry to think that it was not true.'

Dora's glance around the room was but momentary, yet it was sufficient to make her feel how blest Amy must be with such a home, and such parents. 'I could envy you, Amy, so very much,' she said, after they had both spoken a few kind words to Emily, and urged her not to forget her promise of writing ; 'yes, I could envy you for everything.'

'Not envy,' said Colonel Herbert ; 'you would not wish to deprive her of her blessings.'

'No,' answered Dora ; 'but I would wish to share them ; every one wishes for happiness.'

'And every one might find it,' observed Colonel Herbert, 'if they would but seek for it rightly. Perhaps, though, I was wrong in saying happiness ; but peace, which is the nearest approach to it on earth, is in every one's power.'

Mr Harrington's voice was heard calling to his daughters to hasten ; and the conversation was abruptly broken off.

'What did your papa mean, Amy?' said Dora, as she stood upon the step of the carriage. 'Just tell me, in one word, if you can, that I may think about it.'

'He must have meant,' answered Amy, 'what I have often been told, that when people are good their hearts are at peace, and then no sorrow can really make them miserable.'

Dora had not time to reply. The parting words were once more spoken ; the carriage drove from the door ; and Amy returned to her happy fireside, and the enjoyment of the blessing she had that moment described.

Mr and Mrs Harrington returned with their family to Emmer-ton ; and to a careless observer, it might have seemed that the death of their child had produced but a passing impression on their minds. The first bitterness of grief was gradually softened by time and the daily occupations of life, and calmness, and even cheerfulness, were at length restored to them. But the effects of their sorrow were not the less real, because exhibited in action rather than in words. They were to be seen in a constant observance of family worship, in an increasing attention to their children and servants, and in the untiring exertions which were made to assist Mr Walton in providing for the comfort and instruction of the poor. The change was felt by every one within the reach of their influence ; but to Dora, it was a blessing

beyond all price, for Emmerton was so retired as to oblige her to depend entirely upon her home for happiness ; and in her parents she now met not only with affection, but sympathy, and, from their example, learnt to find her chief satisfaction in the quiet performance of everyday duties. Of Miss Cunningham she saw but little, Mrs Harrington being too fully alive to the defects of her disposition and education, to feel any longer inclined to cultivate an intimacy which had once been considered of so much importance ; and although Margaret's character differed too widely from Dora's to afford all that was required in a friend, her sister was enabled, by continual watchfulness, to bear with her failings, and cherish her better qualities, while the society of Amy gave her the great blessing of confidence and mutual interest, which formerly she had so much needed.

And years passed on, and Emily Morton was still an inmate of the cottage. Amy no longer depended upon her instruction, but the blessing of her love and her example, when once felt, it was hard to part from ; and neither Colonel Herbert nor his wife could willingly consent again to cast upon the mercy of the world one who had gradually become dear to them as their eldest child. Colonel Herbert had prophesied truly, when he said that the summer of Emily's life was yet to come. The remembrance of Rose never faded from her mind, but it was blended with a calm and lasting gratitude for the mercy which had taken her in her innocence to a world where there was no sin ; and Amy's deep affection, and never-ceasing consideration for her happiness, filled up entirely the aching void, which would otherwise have been left in her heart. Neither was there any cause now to fear lest Miss Morton should be treated with ridicule or contempt at Emmerton, for the feelings with which she was there regarded were those of the truest esteem and regard ; a regard heightened by the circumstances which had for ever associated her with the remembrance of little Rose.

And of Amy herself, what more need be said ? If the cottage had been a scene of happiness, when shared only with her mother, its enjoyment was tenfold increased by the presence of her father and Miss Morton. Mrs Herbert's health was, for some time, a source of anxiety ; but care, and the tranquillity of her domestic life, by degrees restored her natural strength, and Amy's mind was then completely at rest ; and although, as she grew up, the romance with which she had once invested Emmerton partially vanished, her pleasure in visiting it became more

real as she felt, day by day, that her cousins were more fully her friends, and able to enter into her highest and purest pleasures. And there were times when even the visions of her childhood seemed realised. The chapel was opened for daily service whenever the opportunity offered ; and Amy could then yield to the influence of its hallowed beauty, without one sigh of regret, as she gazed, not upon noble knights and high-born ladies, but upon those she best loved on earth, about to join in the solemn act of united worship, and to offer to their Maker, not only the sacrifice of their lips, but also of their hearts and lives.

Amy's lot was indeed blessed ; blessed in her parents, her relations, and her friends ; but, above all, blessed in that she had been taught to remember her Creator in the days of her youth, and could look forward with calm confidence to the Divine support in the ' evil days,' which must come upon all.

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